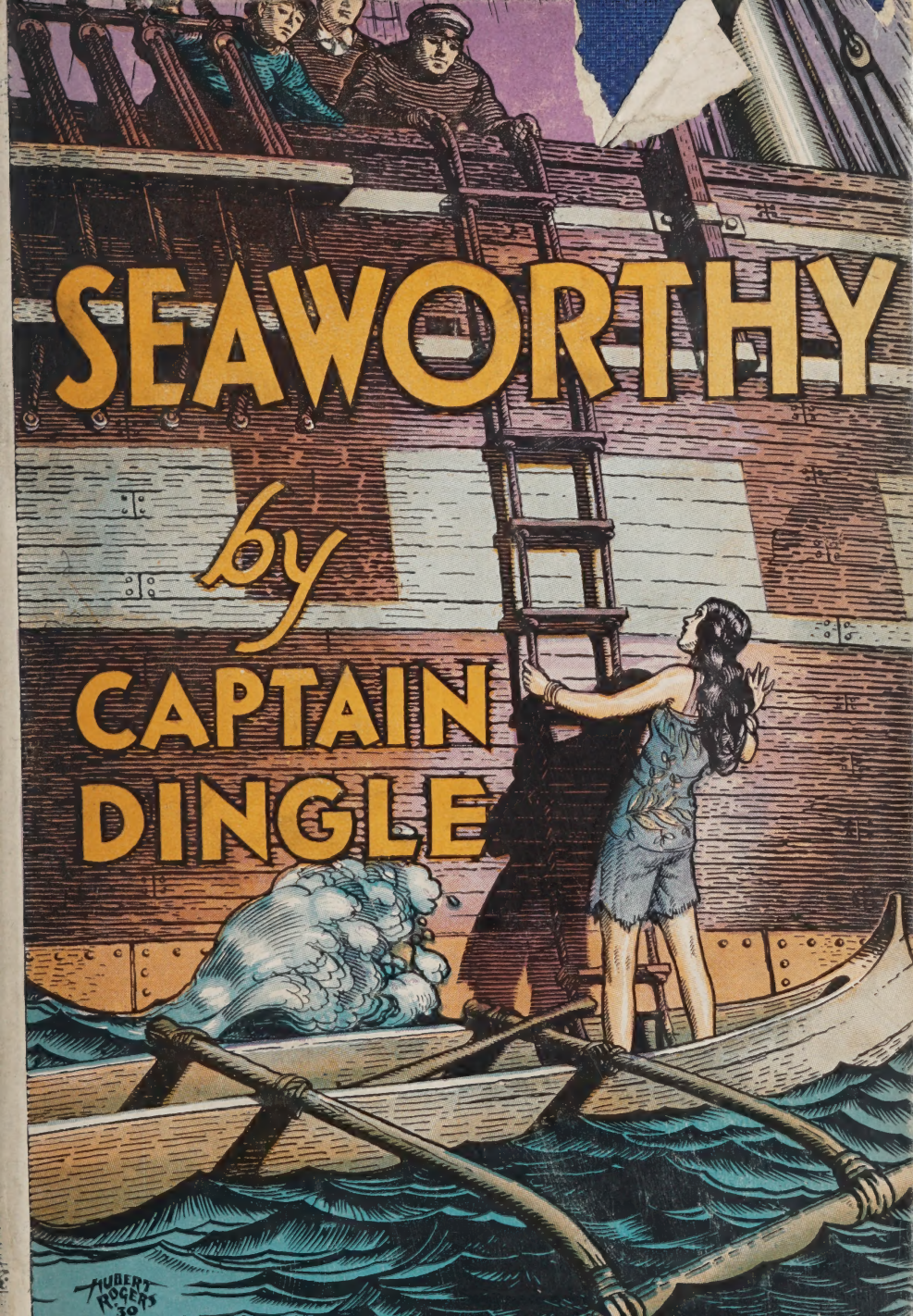
SEAWORTHY
by
CAPTAIN
DINGLE
HUBERT ROGERS '30

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SEAWORTHY

By Captain Aylward E. Dingle

WHEN the Cuttyhunk left the New Bedford wharf on her search for sperm she carried with her an involuntary member of the crew, Dick Edwards, shanghaied by the connivance of his father, owner of the ship, and the captain and mate of the whaler. Dick had been wasting his youth in bad company, and his grim father was ready for harsh measures. The Cuttyhunk, bound for a four years' cruise in the Pacific, was old and slow. There was more danger and adventure on her decks than oil in her hold, for she is the scene of a prime lot of red-blooded happenings. A mutiny and a treasure hunt, rough life and responsibility, accomplish at last the end the father sought. Dick became a man, and how he brought the Cuttyhunk safely back to port makes a yarn that the *London News* calls 'a fine piece of nautical story-telling.' Few detective stories hold as many thrills packed down and brimming over as this tale.

SEAWORTHY

DINGLE

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SEAWORTHY

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BY

CAPTAIN DINGLE

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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1930

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SEAWORTHY

SEAWORTHY

CHAPTER I

AN UNLICKED CUB

THE wharf fitted the town, and the ship fitted the wharf. Which simply means that all three bore the sign that the golden age of whaling had passed. All along the line of the harbor, on both sides, similar wharves rotted on their green spiles. Similar ancient square-riggers rotted at their wharves. In the town the houses huddled together as if trying to hide from the world their shabby paintlessness. A few ship-chandlers remained optimistically open; a couple of blacksmiths kept their forges smoldering about the wharf end, and in the waterside speak-easies, if opulent enough, a few bent or bowed or broken sailormen lingered, hopefully. For the Cuttyhunk, last of the deep-sea whalers, was fitting out for a last cruise for sperm.

No plum-duff voyage this, either. Plum-duffers made short cruises, sticking to the North Atlantic, in small schooners and such trivial craft. The Cuttyhunk was a real spouter. A Cape-Horner. When she came home, it would be with full holds, whether one year or two or three were needed for the filling. And she would have seen half the world. The other half being dry land and no likely place for whales.

There was activity on the wharf. Bundles of barrel staves and thick rounds of iron hoops were going on board. Casks of beef, too, and casks of sailors' bread — hardtack; bundles of spare oars and coils of whaleline; a couple of spare boats lay alongside, waiting for a hoist aboard; there were long bodies of sails going aloft, dangling from their gantlines like Slim Jims being hanged. Bolts of new canvas and barrels of tar, drums of paint and bags of fuel for the galley stove; a precious little cask of rum, and a precious great chest of slops, watch coats, stockings, seaboots, oilskins, and what have you; these disappeared into the belly of the old whaleship as old captain Jonah disappeared into the interior of that Biblical whale which started the vogue for whaling stories.

At the extreme end of the wharf there was a tumbledown shack which once had housed the homeward-bound light kept up by the owners of the Cuttyhunk. They owned a fleet of such as she then. Kept a permanent watchman too. Now the shack was nobody's business. While the stores went on board, and the loiterers shuffled nearer, waiting for the moment to be ripe for them to go aboard and seek a chance to go a-whaling again, a hot crap game was boiling into fight in the tumbledown shack.

'You shoot crooked, Yerner!' snarled young Dick Edwards. Dick was a loser. A bad loser. Unlicked, as yet.

'You're a damned liar!' Yerner came back, and in two seconds the shack boiled over. The two seconds

were necessary for the lads to get onto their feet. The rest of the idle lads in the shack were on their feet at the first word of trouble.

And the fight was as brief as the cause. Or the warning. Dick Edwards was a lusty lad, of eighteen, strong as a young colt, and as fearless as that colt unbroken. Yerner had seen several more years, and several more crooked gambling fights. He was crooked too. He stuck his skull into Dick's face in the very first minute of fighting, hoping to end it that way. But Dick was stubborn. His stubbornness was his father's despair — and pride too, if it may be whispered — and he declined to let a mere butt in the face stop him. He staggered a bit, recovered, and then jumped on Yerner's right foot grinding down hard on it. Meanwhile, he thumped the Yerner face with two good hands doubled hard, and the shack rang with cheers. Yerner had taken much money from the lads.

'Give him hell, Dick! Give him hell!'

Dick was conscientiously giving Yerner hell when the doorway was darkened, the huddled crap-shooters dispersed, and a square, stocky, angry old man stalked in. He caught Dick by the ear, kicked Yerner in the trousers, and dragged Dick outside with as little apparent effort as he might have pulled a cork from an ullaged bottle.

'You damned cub! Brawling again! Dice, too!' With each ground-out exclamation the angry old man slapped Dick on the other ear enthusiastically.

'Aw, Dad!' howled Dick, nor dared to squirm

while that grip was on his ear. He took, perforce, the slapping, and even Yerner forbore to jubilate. That one kick Yerner had got burned him as if he had taken a seat on an electric gridiron. The gang of idle lads separated. They would gather again, when old Peter Edwards was well out of sight, but that's no matter.

Peter Edwards, late master mariner, had come from paying a farewell visit aboard the Cuttyhunk. All the pleasant taste of that visit had vanished. Young Dick would never amount to anything. Gambling, scrapping, idling away his precious time at an age when his father had been third mate of a deep-water ship. Worst of all, people were talking about Dick. It was being said, lately, that old Peter Edwards was softening since quitting the sea: that young Dick overran him, defied him, had completely flouted his authority. There seemed to be some justification for that opinion too. The Cuttyhunk had been fitting out now for three weeks. Every able man in the little port had earned a bit of money. About the only healthy men who were not making wages on the ship were those who were going to sea in her, and who, sailor-like, saw no point in turning a hand aboard the ship they were engaged for until that ship was well clear of the dock to which she was tied.

Yet there were a few others. Dick and his gang. And while taking a glowing glass of rum with Captain Turk and grim Ben Barrett, chief mate, sly words had been passed concerning a son of the house

of Edwards who could not stomach whale oil. Peter Edwards was still sore over that. He hung onto Dick's ear through sheer humiliation; and Dick's humiliation was as intense as the pain of the twisted ear. Straight up the street to the Edwards house Dick was marched: then straight into the old man's private den.

'You go to work to-morrow,' announced Peter, shutting the door upon them and facing the lad. 'You'll report to Sims Revel and ——'

'I won't work there!' cried Dick. 'Me sweep out a dirty little grocer's store? Get me a real job and I'll go to work, but if you think I'm going to be an errand boy, you're crazy!'

'At eight to-morrow morning you report to Revel,' said Peter. 'Either that or you go to sea. You've had your last free lodging, free pocket money, and free clothes from me. There's a chance for you in the Cuttyhunk. Suit yourself.'

With a final gesture of granite implacability, Peter Edwards swung out again, unheeding Dick's furious retort. For just one instant the old man was about to stop and go after Dick.

'Darned stinking old blubber-hunter!' the boy snarled. 'Fat chance you'll have of getting me into a gang of reeking riffraff like that. And you can tell Revel to get somebody no better worth.'

Peter cared little what Dick thought of a grocer; but he did care, at least, what he said about the fine old profession of sperm whaling and the sturdy men who followed it. That was another sore point in the

Edwards home. Peter had dabbled in many kinds of sailorman's art. He had laboriously carved whale ivory into many a beautiful piece of skrimshander; he had with patient art portrayed in paint every ship he had ever sailed in. His masterpiece he had hung in his son's room, a painting of the very Cutty-hunk now lying at the wharf. Dick had covered the painting with a print of a brazen hussy in a red bathing-suit which would not have made a decent flag for a rowboat. These things rankled. But Peter was more hurt over Dick's apparent worthlessness. He stifled the impulse to go back and start the quarrel over again. He heard Dick slam the door of his room and then the house door slammed.

Five minutes later, Peter's ancient automobile puttered and skidded through the yard gates, and sped, with Dick at the helm, around a corner. Peter clapped on his shabby hat again and went out, divided between sorrow and anger. He went back to the wharf, for only in the atmosphere of the ships and the sea would he find ease. And as he turned down by the dock, his own son honked defiantly for him to get out of the way. In the car were three of Dick's wildest chums, two bobbed flappers and another idle youth, son of a man who had been a good sailorman in his day, but whose goings and comings upon the sea were now devious rather than aboveboard. Seemed to make a lot of money too. There was little doubt in the town where the younger set got the liquor they were always supplied with. One of the lads flourished a flask with little regard

for witnesses. It was the last straw. Peter Edwards set his foot on the whaleship's gangplank again, and went direct to the cabin.

'Turk, I'm here to ask that favor you always said you'd do if time came,' he said harshly.

'Anything in my power, Peter. Is it cash?' Turk smiled. He and Peter were old shipmates. Peter had taught Cap'n Turk his business.

'Money be damned!' growled Peter, scowling. 'I'd like to have Ben Barrett down here for a gam if he ain't too busy. And if you're agreeable, I'd like him and you between ye to take on a job you both told me you'd admire to have some time ago.'

'You don't mean Dick?' Turk stared, with eyes that soon had a twinkle in them.

Peter nodded gloomily. Turk put his head up the companionway, and with all the power of lusty lungs: 'Mister Barrett! Oh, Ben!' he bawled. 'Git down here soon's you kin! Here's old Peter Edwards come to his senses!'

CHAPTER II

SHANGHAIED

BEN BARRETT was swift in coming, for the inducement was great. But even in the few brief minutes he took in giving over the tallying of deck stores to another, and, taking the companionway stairs in two jumps, Peter Edwards had seen many things near to his heart: so near that by the time the three old blubber-hunters were together and alone, the smoky, low, odorous cabin of the Cuttyhunk was to him simply a panorama. Cap'n Turk had placed cigars on the table. Long, black, comfortably pungent cheroots well seasoned since he had bought them in the Indies two years ago. And rum. Not rum-runners' bowel-burning stuff, but good rich Jamaica, cunningly hidden in the middle of a barrel of sugar. In the smoke of the cheroots, in the warm glow of the old Jamaica, Peter Edwards saw pictures. And the creak of tackles on deck, the sharp click of windlass pawls bringing in the heavier stores, all helped to paint the high lights in his mental pictures.

He saw a long line of Edwardses. All whalemen. Never had there been one male member of the respected old line to turn up his nose at honest sperm oil until Dick broke the link. In his smoke-wreathing he saw scarred but capable old ships, bursting their blusterous way across lonely oceans, boats

ever swung out ready to lower, manned by lean, keen-eyed seamen to whom the world perhaps owed more for discoveries of far lands than to the greater heralded explorers of set-down history. He saw rising above the litter that was the wharf, where now the aged Cuttyhunk began to sit deep in the water with her burden of four years' stores, the white sails of the tropics, the racing seas under trade wind skies, the woolly clouds of the fine days and the grim gray masses of the evil weather. He saw no grime, no untidiness, for his was the soul of a sailor. He saw no grease, no smoke; no reek could he smell, for his was the heart of a whaleman. And his soul was sore because his son Dick had cast ridicule and revilement upon those things.

Ben Barrett entered, spitting on his hands and grinning hungrily. Cap'n Turk had been grinning, too; but somehow he saw in Peter's haggard face something too grave to grin about. And Ben Barrett's grin was not so vivid two minutes after he came in. There was rather a solemn silence for a moment. Three fresh cigars were lit, and three thick clouds of smoke added to the fog.

'Stinking old blubber-hunter! That's what this ship is, gentlemen!' Peter started jerkily. 'Gang of reeking riffraff — that's you fellows! And my boy Dick says so! Gone joy-riding, he is, with the bootlegger's precious whelp and a pair o' gals as'll soon fetch up in the Magdalen Home. My car, they took, and with liquor aboard. Look at here!'

Peter showed his greasy mud stains. His cigar

was broken by the clench he put on it. He spilled his rum through sheer agitation.

'He won't go to work at Revel's. Says he's too good. Won't ship along with you. I've given you the reasons. You said there was a couple of hands needed, Ben?'

'Bring him aboard, Peter!' grinned Ben, happy again.

'That's what I'm here to see you about,' Peter returned. 'I don't want to bring him aboard. I want him to get the whole works from a bat on the nose to working him up in a spouter. And I don't want to appear in it. There's a man somewhere hid in that young cub, and I want him to wake up to find it out.'

The old man paused, and nervously poured a little rum. He swallowed it quickly, avoiding the eyes of Turk and his mate.

'Ain't telling me to shanghai the boy, be you?' Cap'n Turk asked, frowning down Ben Barrett's wink. Peter Edwards coughed, and blew thick jets of smoke.

'Didn't I say I didn't want to appear? But I'll give Ben a hundred dollars cash when I see Dick in a fo'c'sle bunk, safe to make the voyage. And if you both bring him home to me a man, I'll give you a share apiece out of my holdings in the Cuttyhunk.'

There was another pause, in which Peter slyly watched his friends. He saw Ben uneasily seek some advice by a look at Turk. He saw Turk getting

red, as if not yet certain that Peter Edwards was not suffering from Jamaica fever.

Peter went on speaking, in a sort of impersonal fashion: 'The boy told me once it was only because I was his dad he let me twist his lugs and slap his ear. Said he'd be glad of a chance to take out the soreness I gave him on a whaler's chief mate. I believe he did say once that he meant some day to sass Ben Barrett, just to give him a chance to hit him, and he'd show the town all about the toughness of a bucko.'

'Tell me where I'll likely find him around dusk, an' have that hundred ready!' growled Barrett.

Peter went on as if not hearing. 'He'd get over a busted nose. I did. Black eyes don't stay black, either. And there's many a man ain't a man until a better one hammers the everlasting gimp into him. There he is now, out riding with a parcel o' little wasters, lapping up bad liquor, wrecking my car. Down there at the Point, shouldn't wonder, flinging an indecent leg at that Black Bottom honky-tonk until nigh midnight. Trouble is, the young cub can handle himself for all his worthless doings. Shouldn't wonder if it took a couple of good men to handle him at that. Mebbe three.'

'Huh!' Barrett snorted. 'Any time I can't handle any half-baked kid like young Dick —— Down the P'int, is he?'

'And I'd give most all I've got to see him come home to me bright-eyed, and straight, and a man,' Peter went on, as if Barrett had not spoken. Ben

caught a nod from Cap'n Turk, and strode from the cabin, snorting.

'He's going to earn that hundred,' grinned Turk.

Peter still spoke on in the same sort of impersonal tone, but loud enough now to follow Ben up the stairs.

'He's half-baked, but he's husky. And if 'twas me going to make sure of a hundred good dollars, I'm not so sure I wouldn't take three good men along with me. Thanks for your rum, Turk. Reckon I'll run along home now. Sailing on the night tide, ain't you? I'll be handy. Mebbe I can let go a line for ye.'

At eleven o'clock Ben Barrett and two harpooneers prowled around the dance-hall where Dick could be seen noisily leading his party in wild carousal. Ben was unmarried, and he knew sailortown in a score of ports; but the sight of those youngsters, boys and girls, flushed with liquor and capering like habitués of a Continental red-light house, wrenched a curse from him and made him spit. He sought for some excuse with which to get the party out. He could think of nothing more original than telephoning a complaint, as from a sober citizen, to the police. The dance-hall was often raided, but rarely until complaint was formally made. He took his men back to town. It was not far, and there was but the one road from the Point. Once Dick started home, he must pass a point near the wharves.

Ben Barrett got his call in, and saw two policemen

start off in a car. Then Ben called the dance-hall, and told the proprietor of the raid. In half an hour or less something ought to happen. He posted his harpooneers, stalwart, lean, steel-muscled flingers of death, at a turn in the road with a length of new whaleline. He took himself off to a spot not many yards away, where he could make sure that the rope did not stop the wrong car. Then they waited.

Laughing, nervous, flushed little groups came hurrying by. Now they were outside the hectic atmosphere of the roadhouse and the liquor was dying, the merriment had to be forced to survive at all. Some walked, some rode piled high in inadequate cars. A motor-cycle roared along, two girls hanging to the rear mudguard, swerving from side to side hair-raisingly. Then came Dick's gang.

'Blo-o-ow!' pealed from Ben's throat as if a hundred-barrel cachalot had spouted alongside. The harpooneers ran their line out, and the car came to a stop, while the girls screamed. Ben was on the running-board before the engine stopped, and Dick greeted him with a swift, stinging thump on the nose which turned Ben into a red man.

'Hold-up!' yelled Dick's companion, and leaped from the other side, leaving the girls to help themselves. The harpooneers let the rest go, piling in to help Ben. And Ben found himself amazingly in need of help. Suddenly the little dark road was full of fight. Dick put his hands on the sides of the open door, and launched both feet full into the chest of the nearest harpooneer, hurling him into the ditch.

And from the superior height of the running-board, Dick fought like a berserk, fully believing thugs were after him, inclined to believe that Yerner was behind it. He was in error; but not entirely wrong.

Fight as he might, no youth of Dick's immaturity could expect to hold off forever three sea-hardened whalemen. Courage he had, in plenty: but so had Ben Barrett and his harpooneers. They stormed the car, forcing Dick back until he was tripped by the gear shift and emergency brake. Even then he rallied and drove them out, snatching up a bottle from the seat and using it with no false purpose. When they fell back, Dick stepped on the starter. The motor clattered. With hasty hands he fumbled for the gear, his foot felt for the clutch. And up from the other side rose Yerner, grinning, swinging a rock in a hastily removed sock. He whacked Dick on the skull with it, and Dick fell over the wheel, unconscious.

'He had it coming from me. Glad to help you, mister,' Yerner said to Barrett. Ben glowered, snuffling through a broken nose. 'I was waiting for a chance to stop him myself when I saw you fellows all ready for him,' Yerner added pleasantly.

'Can you drive a car, young feller?' Ben demanded.

'Betcha,' grinned Yerner.

'Drive us down to the Cuttyhunk, then. Hop in, lads.'

Yerner rattled the old car down alongside. He chattered. He was bursting with joy. Here was

something unexpected. Young Dick Edwards had called him cheat once too often. Now Dick was being shanghaied off to sea in a stinking old whaler. Yerner's people had been whalers, too, but the blood had thinned a couple of generations ago. Yerner helped drag Dick from the car. The harpooneers picked the unconscious lad up and bore him on board. Ben dangled the strung stone that had felled him.

'What d'ye say about rewardin' this yer young gent, as walloped his chum on the callybash to help us?' Ben called after them.

Jed Roach, who had lost two teeth at Dick's hands, growled over his shoulder: 'I says give him sech a reward as'll keep you in his memory for four years, Ben. Sech a dirty scut!'

Yerner started to clamber from the car again, alarmed. Ben tapped him with the rock, and dragged him all the way out. And he hoisted him to his shoulder and trotted up the gangway with him as Peter Edwards appeared, peering as he riffled over a hundred dollars, and handed them to Ben.

'Dunno as I desarve it, Peter, but I sartainly earned it,' grunted Ben. 'Never would hev got him ef 'twasn't fer this yer scut hittin' Dick with a rock. Oh, well, ef you insist. There's the car. Mebbe we broke it. I dunno. It rattled us down here all right. Rattled quite a bit. You see Dick?'

'He ain't hurt, unless that rock hurt him. I'm glad you got that Yerner rascal, too. 'Twon't do Dick any harm at all to find him aboard. Shouldn't

wonder if it started Dick off in the right fashion, just wanting to be different. Go on, or the boy'll be waking up. Tug's fast to the other side. I'll let go the lines. So long, Ben, and greasy luck!'

In ten minutes the Cuttyhunk was swimming placidly seaward. Peter Edwards watched her diminishing shape from the wheel of his car; and a mist was before his eyes, for he had seen his son lying bloody and quiet. But through the mist, red though it was, there loomed to his hopeful vision the figure of a man returning to him, some day. A hundred times his son.

CHAPTER III

ABOARD THE SPOUTER

Dick could have told the world that he felt rotten. He awoke in a narrow box as dark as a black bag and smelling sickeningly of aged oil and rank bilge. His head ached. His mouth tasted as if a family of kittens had just moved out. Above the general all-around ache that bothered his head was one sharp, sore, tangible-to-the-touch, pulpy bruise from which a trickle of dried blood had caked down both sides of his face.

He sat up and bumped his throbbing head on another narrow box above him. Groaning, he thrust his legs over the edge of the grimy bunk, and crouched, sitting up half doubled, trying to get his bearings. The place creaked and groaned. It moved. The darkness was different from any he had before experienced. It was not darkness so much as gloom: for when at last he could raise and turn his head, he made out a narrow aperture, crossed with narrow stairs, beyond which was a faint glow of daylight. Somewhere beyond the glow men's voices sounded queerly. From beyond the glow came eddying air, clean air; salty, tangy air; sea air. And while Dick peered around him, finding his eyes could show him things once they adjusted themselves to the gloom, a lustier voice than the rest rang out quite near to the dayglow; a booted step crunched on the narrow

ladder. Right overhead a heavy coil of rope was flung to the deck; and a shrill, yelping voice began to howl a halliard chantey. Dick had often heard it, when a little fellow, while his father came home from his seafaring.

'Oh, whiskey is the life of man,
Whiskey, Johnny!
I drink whiskey when I can,
Oh, whiskey for me, Johnny!'

'Ugh!' groaned Dick, with the second-hand taste of bad whiskey sharp in his mouth. 'Why couldn't they start any song but that?'

'Suffering polecats!' groaned an unseen voice near by, just as heartfelt as Dick's. Then the boots on the ladder clumped on the heaving floor of the gloomy den, a slashing draft of windy brine pervaded the place, and a burly, crouching shape came straight to where Dick sat, as easily as if gloom meant nothing to the shape's eyes. And Ben Barrett's voice filled the low-beamed forecastle with chesty sound.

'How many times d'you want callin'? Hey, you!' Ben had Dick by the shirt breast and hauled him to the floor. 'Show a leg, y' skulkin' half man. Up wi' you. Up, before I rubber-sole yer pants!'

Dick shook his head, slowly recovering his wits. He flamed with fury. Now he knew. There had been something familiar about that nose he had broken when the thugs held his car up. Something familiar about the voice. Ben Barrett! He had told his father once, he remembered, what any modern foot-

ball tackle could do to a stiff-jointed old bucko like Ben. Or any other salty bucko with no more brains than to be a sailor.

'My gosh!' groaned that other unseen voice, miserably.

Dick balanced himself, and made a tottery rush at Ben, fists swinging. And Dick found his first mistake: first of many he was to make before the sea cured him. Ben grabbed him by the flesh under his arms, gripped him until the lad could have screamed; and grinding his own wiry skull hard up beneath Dick's unbristled chin he carried him backwards to the ladder, changed his grip until he got a shoulder in place, and hove up. Dick shot up through the hatch, and landed sprawling among a gang of booted men moving from one rope to another. Even as he sprawled, Dick heard Ben's voice turned upon that unseen companion in misery down below.

'Here, sonny, grab you holt o' this. That's you. Try an' bust it.'

A voice which was also vaguely familiar spoke, a hand as hard as oak bark hauled him to his unsteady feet, a wet, hard rope was thrust into his hands while the gang bore him along with them. They stretched out the fore topsail halliards, the chanteyman started another tune, and up from the forecastle hatch shot another delinquent. On his heels stalked Ben Barrett.

'Oh, Ranzo was no sailor,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!
He shipped aboard a whaler,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!'

Such rotten songs these men selected! Dick pulled blindly. He knew what he would do as soon as he got his eyes clear and his nerves steady. Just now he felt like obeying. Ben Barrett picked up that second delinquent as the chantey started the topsail yard aloft, shook him like a dog, and pitched him bodily among the men at the tail end of the rope.

'Make this scut pull, or I'll work you all up!' said Ben. And man after man thumped the whining unfortunate with shoulder and elbow, treading on his feet, forcing him to pull. Dick felt mildly curious as to who it could be. What other poor devil had got into a mess like this? But the dawn was gray as yet. There was a mist. The men before and behind him seemed twice as big and burly as other men. Dick pulled, swearing. If Ranzo had never been born, there would have been no whalers. Or perhaps it was the other way around. Anyhow, he hated Ranzo. Almost as much as he hated Ben Barrett.

'Oh, pity Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!
Oh, poor old Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!'

Things were all wrong. A chill wind blew through Dick's light summer clothes. Everything he touched was wet. Drops dripped from the great dark sails which he could see blackening the misty gray overhead. There was hollow thunder beneath the bows, and sprays shot high to the old ship's plunging and came volleying aft among the crew. But the men wore oilskins, and boots, and tarpaulin hats. Dick

shivered in a rig which was only adequate for flinging the light fantastic toe on a dance-room floor. All his rebellious spirit surged hot within him. He would have this thing out first as well as last. He'd let his father know. The old man might be hard, might want his boy to be a whaler, but he'd never permit a lot of blubber-reeking toughs to kidnap his son and forcibly bear him off from his home. Dick might sweep a store, in a pinch; but he'd do it of his free will.

'Hey, whar you goin'?' Ben Barrett had him by the arm, hauling him about as he was striding aft. Dick only gave the mate a swift glance, saw the broken nose; with a swerve and a writhe the lusty, angry lad drove home another stiff punch, and Ben's nose streamed again. But that was all. In a twinkling the tough old whaleman had Dick by the flesh of his breast again, his grizzled head under Dick's chin, and had rushed him to the rail. There he held him with one arm like an oaken beam, and with the other slapped him about the face until his nose bled harder than Ben's own. Until his head buzzed.

'Fetch a draw bucket o' water!' snuffled Ben.

Jed Roach, the harpooneer who had lost two teeth at Dick's hands, came running, with a dripping pail of brine, cold from the sea.

'Souse th' cub!' said Ben, and souse the water came, full in Dick's smarting eyes. When he opened them, Ben was on his way to the quarter-deck. Jed stood grinning humorously, with no trace of resent-

ment for his broken mouth. Dick felt sick. The motion of the old whaler was strange. He was sick besides from overnight tribulations. But one thing there was which could sting him to further action. The next thing he saw to Jed Roach's not unfriendly face was the unexpected vision of Yerner; Yerner with his back against a mast, laughing at Dick. Dick almost grinned to see his long-time enemy in like case with himself. But Jed Roach was saying something.

'Thet's th' scut thet give you a sock on th' callybash last night, young feller. If 'twuzn't fer his rock in a sock, be damned ef th' mate an' two of us c'd ha' mastered you. 'Twuz him.'

Dick heard it all, but not clearly. When Jed finished, Dick was at Yerner's throat; and even Cap'n Turk stopped pacing beside the helm to watch, so fierce was the attack. Yerner fought back, as a rat will fight. He kicked Dick in the stomach. That did Dick no good. But righteous anger was superior to agony. Dick backed his foe against the potato locker, and then struck his knee between Yerner's and punched with every ounce of power he had, until Yerner sank to the deck at his feet. Dick reeled back to the bulwarks, and sat down on the spare topmast lashed in the waterways. His head fell into his hands, and he could have cried in sheer misery. He was seasick. Yerner's kick had been a vicious one. Last night's bad whiskey and manhandling had not been gentle. No, Dick was feeling not very courageous. He believed he might

even postpone marching aft to beard Cap'n Turk in his royal domain. But Ben Barrett himself was coming forward with a brimming bucket of sea-water, and Dick tried to rise. It was no use. He sank back with a groan, adding to his mental score against the mate one more mark to be wiped off as soon as he was himself and could stand firm on his feet. He closed his eyes, waiting for the sosh of the stinging brine. He heard it sosh, but it missed him. And his peeping eyes saw Yerner staggering to his feet, half strangled, guarding his face with an elbow, whimpering to the mate to let him go, while Ben Barrett was already drawing another bucket. The second mate took charge of Yerner; and Bully Hogg was the man to do a man up properly. Poor Dick. He fully believed that if Yerner were treated like that, his own lot could be no less than hanging by the thumbs. He had heard his father tell of that.

It was a soft, philosophical, dusky voice that really spoke to Dick. There had been a rough sort of humorous friendliness in Jed Roach's voice; but this was actually soothing. He looked up into the coal-black face of the Doctor — Pluto, the ship's cook. Pluto had a pan of potatoes and a peeling knife. He set them down beside Dick.

'Heah, manny, yo' sot theah an' shave dem spuds fo' brekfust. 'Twill keep yo' stiddy an' busy too. Keep yo' lip stiff, an' doan' talk back to yo' officers. Call dem sar, an' run at de word, an' dey leave yo' alone, mos'ly.'

'Yes, sir,' moaned Dick, picking up a warty

potato and wondering how a fellow peeled it. Pluto laughed, a gurgling, sunny-south sort of laugh. He took away the knife as Dick made the first hack at the potato, and started to peel it himself.

'Golly, honey, Ah ain't no genelmun. Ah'm jes' de ol' Doctah. Yo' doan't call me sar. No, sar. Dem officers, an' Cap'n Turk, Ah means. Look. Yo' peel spuds lak this. Thin, so's yo' doan't waste none. Yo'll be feelin' fine soon's yo' git some good dry hash in yo' belly. Hey! Gib me dem spuds! Yo' run along to de rail, quick! Ma gracious! Dey tole me yo' wuz ole Cap'n Edwards's boy. Ma' belly an' bones, sech a sailor!'

But Dick was half soothed by the sight and sound of Yerner, even more sick than he, being driven to plunge his arms to the elbows into a cask of pungent brine, fishing out great fat lumps of odorous salt pork for the steward's harness cask. Yes, surely, the life of a whaler was tough. Whalemen might after all be tougher than he had believed.

CHAPTER IV

REBELLION

The Cuttyhunk was making a passage. Her cruising grounds were in the Pacific, and she was bound around the Horn. But no blubber-hunter ever neglected an opportunity to flesh a lance or fill a cask, and while Captain Turk kept his old ship to her work, driving her until she complained in every treenail and butt, he also kept his mastheads manned and his first boat ready to lower. The first day at sea, when Dick was initiated to the realities of shipboard, in his swift rush to the rail, he could still discern the familiar Point, at the home harbor mouth. There was a stiff half gale blowing, and the ship sailed fast; but not for two hours did he lose sight of the land he so devoutly yearned for. He had made two attempts to face the skipper. Once sheer stomach stopped him. The other time the mate stopped him.

'See that main royal?' quoth Ben, nodding upwards.

Dick was pale and dizzy. Looking up aloft at the swaying royal yard caused him to feel as if he were riding on a wild horse, instead of standing on a wide and more or less solid deck. He had been full of resolution a moment before. Now he was so entirely wretched that he was ready to just let Ben rave at

him: to take it and say nothing, but to do nothing either, whatever the penalty. Ben had different ideas.

'Answer me, an' don't give me dirty looks, my lad!' said Ben, gripping the lad by an arm. 'Come on. Climb onto the rail. Grab holt!'

Dick was hanging back. The mate shook him by a leg as he teetered perilously; and Dick was forced to shift his hands higher to avoid being flung into the sea. And how cold, gray, and malicious the sea looked! He had known it to look all blue and sunny and laughing down at the Point.

'Up to the royal! Go on, my lad. I'll waste a bit o' time to show you, once.' And so on, right up to where the rigging spread below the maintop. Ben at his heels. Ben's hand ever shoving at him. Ben crawling up as he timorously braved the overhanging futtock shrouds: for Ben Barrett was not after the lad's life. Dick scrambling, because he feared Ben was. And up the long topmast rigging; out on the topgallant spreader; up the Jacob's ladder past the broad, deep topgallantsail booming with wind; and on to the royal yard which seemed to be hung up there for no other reason than to hold him for a moment and cast him down to that queerly narrow, unstable-looking little model of a ship out of which the tall masts sprang. It seemed as if no ship built by mortal man could stand more sail. And the royal mast and yard were so slender. They swayed now. If a sail were loosed on them, that tall fabric of wood, wire, and canvas must go reeling over the side.

Dick was clinging with both hands to the rigging. His eyes closed. His ears ringing.

'Look, you!' roared Ben Barrett. 'Get up here!' He reached out, and Dick had to follow the grip. He found himself sitting on the yard, his arms lovingly embracing the mast. And how the rancid grease that smothered mast and parral tore at his stomach. But Ben was bawling at him. 'That's you! Sit there an' hang on. Keep your eyes liftin'. If you see a spout o' steam comin' right out o' the sea, you holler: "Thar she blows!" An' p'int whar it is. Two hours, that's yer trick. An' look out fer yer hide if somebuddy else sights a spout before you!'

Dick was suddenly alone. The world tottered and fell. When the giddiness passed, he was startled to find himself still seated on the yard. Ben was already on deck, sliding down the royal backstay like a greased streak.

There was little expectation of sighting whales at that moment. The masthead hoops had not been put in place for the lookouts. The ship was still in a raffle of harbor rubbish. Harpooneers were busily coiling whaleline into tubs; honing harpoons, three to a boat; sharpening or straightening the eight-foot lances that probed the whale's vitals when the harpoon had tethered him to the boat. There were water breakers, biscuit kegs, lamps and matches, sails, masts, oars, and bailers to be supplied each of the four boats at the cranes. Until those things were done, a whale might swim alongside and flirt salt

water over the skipper, almost with impunity. But Dick knew nothing of that. Neither did he know that no skipper at the outset of a long voyage would go to the trouble of lowering in a half gale of wind, no matter what he might do a few days later, when the gear was ready and the home shores not so near to leeward. Even had Dick known that he had been put up there on his dizzy perch simply to give him full taste of what going to sea meant, he would have gritted his teeth and borne it; for clinging desperately to the fore royal yard was Yerner, far sicker than Dick, far more miserable.

When at last he heard a bell far below him clang eight, and a thin voice carried up to him to come down, he had in a measure conquered his qualmy stomach. He could at least look around without feeling that he was falling. He put out an uncertain hand for the rigging, wondering if he dared to emulate the mate's lightning slide. That was too much. He carefully clambered into the rigging, and descended ratline by ratline.

'Get yer breakfast, boy!' barked the mate, and Dick shivered at the mention of food. The harpooneers would eat at a second table in the cabin, after the skipper and mates had done. Jed Roach hammered away on the anvil, straightening the soft iron shank of his pet harpoon, and watched Dick sidle to the spare topmast again.

'Don't you set thar an' git chilled, sonny,' said Jed. 'Git you some hash and cawfee inside yer belly.' There was a distinctly kindly note in the

harpooneer's voice, and two missing teeth seemed not to harshen it. Dick set his teeth. He wanted no food. Jed walked over, fitting the pole into his harpoon's socket. And Jed talked: 'You got a dirty deal, you did, along o' that feller droppin' you with thet thar rock. Ef 'twasn't fer that, I might hev a word to say about these here teeth you punched out o' my head. I ain't goin' t' rub it in fer no sech gutsy youngster es you, though. We was after you, but you'd be ashore wi' yer daddy right now ef 'twasn't fer thet dirty swab jest comin' down frum aloft es if th' ratlines was red-hot.'

'You're darned right I'd be ashore!' snapped Dick, on his feet instantly. 'And I'm going to tell the skipper so too. I'll make him land me!'

Jed stopped him on his aftward way.

'Stiddy, my lad. Ain't goin' t' do you no manner o' good, that ain't. No boy ever told the skipper of a ship where to land him yet, an' stayed healthy. Go you an' eat even ef you don't feel like it. Git grub in you, an' keep yer pecker up, an' you'll be man enough by the end of the v'yage to tell all hands what you think of 'em. But not ef you starts in givin' slack to the skipper. An' ef you feel you got to keep right on bustin' Ben Barrett's snoot, why, you need to eat grub more'n ever. Man an' boy I sailed twelve year wi' Ben, an' I never see a growed man beat him yet. You're but a boy, an' you busted Ben's snoot twice already. You might do it again. Prob'ly would. But you'd make Ben peevish. Git you down below an' eat whether you feel

like it or not. You'll feel better even if you hev to let it go.'

Jed urged Dick to the forecastle ladder, and something in the harpooneer's kindly philosophy impelled the sullen lad to follow his advice.

Magically the food did him good. It was dry hash, made of salt beef and onions and potatoes baked until the moisture was all evaporated. There was little fat remaining, and no grease. Then there was coffee, bitter and thick, sweetened with molasses — 'longlick,' they called it. Being the first morning at sea the Doctor had provided bread, and there was butter. But that beat Dick. It wasn't good butter. He did manage to swallow a dozen mouthfuls of hash, however, and most of a pannikin of coffee, before the rank air of the closed place drove him on deck. And the strong salt air did the rest. Half an hour after he emerged from the hatch, he felt more like the man he believed himself than he had since his car was stopped.

He stayed where he was when the mate appeared. Let the mate come. Let him try some more bucko stuff. Dick felt able now to give him an argument. But Ben remained aft. Other men worked, under the second mate's direction. There was the third mate, too, red-faced, fat, perky young Stoll, who had been the dunce of the school when Dick first went there. It was another surprise to Dick. But it had been a day of surprises, from the moment he awoke aboard the spouter. What chiefly interested him now was that neither the mate nor his two juniors paid the

slightest attention to him, sitting idling there when every other man in sight was working. He was to find out later that the crew divided into watches; that while he was off at present, he got a false impression. He began to persuade himself that a nose broken twice in twenty-four hours had prompted even Bucko Ben Barrett to leave him alone. And every minute found him feeling stronger. Once or twice he stood up and stretched, gripping a rope and testing his sore muscles. And he tested his ability to stand steadily, too. With commendable prudence he resolved to wait until the middle of the morning. There was a promise of the sun coming out. The seas were not so bitter-looking. The skies held quite a few bright patches. And it grew warmer as the morning advanced. He would wait. He would walk about until the captain appeared. By that time he knew he was able to march aft, announce his identity, and tell Captain Turk a few things about taking people to sea against their express wish.

Turk came out along with the sun. A golden shaft shot across the deck, shining straight in Dick's face, and the warmth of it thrilled him who had perhaps never before given the sun due appreciation. Captain Turk's voice was heard at the same instant. And Dick strode aft, past wondering or grinning seamen, past perky Stoll, brushing him aside and fetching a scowl from him. Mr. Hogg started across to stop him. Ben Barrett was talking to the skipper prior to going below. Past them all swung young Dick Edwards, and, thrusting in between skipper and mate, accosted Cap'n Turk.

'Cap'n Turk, I want to go ashore! I didn't come into your stinking old ship. My stomach won't stand it. I'm Peter Edwards's son, and if you don't know it, you ought to. Put me on land, and save yourself trouble later on.'

Turk held out a hand restraining two of the mates. He met Dick's furious glance coolly, seeking with side flickers to get some advice from Ben Barrett.

'Hear that, Mister Barrett? Did you hear that? I never heard tell of any Edwards as wasn't a sailor at least, did you? Most of 'em was whalemen, too. Young feller, you must hev got sinful drunk last night. Why, yer head is all bumped up. Go for'ard, an' sleep it off. You're on my articles for a Cape Horn voyage after sperm, an' you go ashore, well, let's say this day four years. That'll about cover us, won't it, Mister Barrett?'

'Never mind Barrett! I say you'll put me ashore now!' yelled Dick.

Mr. Hogg put a heavy hand on his shoulder. 'You're talking to the cap'n, my lad. And Mister Barrett's got a handle too. Get for'ard!'

Dick went mad. He twisted and ducked out of Hogg's grip, and the first face he saw clearly, he pushed his fist into. It was Stoll's red face, and the perkiness vanished from it. He saw Captain Turk's amused face behind the mate, and furiously tried to wallop that. A foot tripped him from behind, and he fell headlong into Ben Barrett's legs. To them he clung like a leech, writhed as if getting from under a football pile-up, and brought Ben crashing down.

He bounded to his feet, and started again for the skipper. But that was as far as he got. The amusement was gone from Turk's face. He was stern and grim. Hogg and Stoll closed in, sandwiching and pinioning Dick; and the mate got up and completed the job with twitching hands.

'The man's crazy. Bad liquor, and evil disposition,' said Turk coldly. 'Tie him to the lashrail, and let him cool off until noon.'

Dick fought, but he was helpless in those iron-muscled hands. Dully he knew he was borne kicking to the rail. Vaguely he knew they were tying his wrists. When they let go of his arms, he swung, tied with small cord to a rail above the bulwarks, his toes just touching the deck. And with every heave of the ship he swung from his feet, agonizingly suspended by his wrists until the back swing enabled him to gain a second's respite.

He hung there until noon. Before that the sun came out strongly. It burned him. The last half-hour of his torment he knew nothing about. He didn't know that even Ben Barrett was watching him narrowly. He only knew at last that a crooning, dusky old voice was murmuring in his ear; that he was lying on deck, and that somebody was smearing deliciously soothing grease over his swollen wrists.

'Dar, honey. Yo'll be fine in a li'l' while. 'Tain't healthy, nohow, to try an' bus' de skipper ob a whaleship in de mug. Ef I wuz you, manny, Ah'd jes' play 'possum ontil Ah growed es big es dem

three mates rolled into one. Yassuh! Yo're mighty good, but yo're gwine to be mighty lot better ef you jes' do yo' wuk an' leabe fightin' to dem es is paid to do it!'

CHAPTER V

WHALE!

Dick was no fool. When he found there was no rest for him, for all his bruised wrists, during his watch on deck, he silently made up his mind that the very best way to even up the score was to keep a civil tongue in his head, avoid more bedevilment, and bide his time. He knew enough about the sea to be sure that such soft jobs as there might be on a whaler never went to a fellow in disgrace with his officers. He knew, whaler or no whaler, that getting beaten up daily was no way to build himself into condition to tackle those bully-damning mates again. And he was under no hallucination about getting set ashore. The Cuttyhunk sailed fast; the land might as well be a thousand miles away now; he had heard his father say scores of times that a Cape-Horner after sperm might easily cruise for a year and never let go an anchor; scarcely sight land unless running through straits. Such a ship carried water enough for two years. She might need fuel within that time, but it was conceivable that she would not.

No. He had to make the voyage unless he died. And Dick had no intention of dying unless by accident. He was put to helping with the boats; and handling the long ash oars, the heavy drogues, the line tubs and water breakers, tortured his throbbing wrists; but strangely he found himself interested in

the work. At supper-time he could eat, too. When next he came on deck, and found that he had all the four hours to himself because he had not drawn a lookout, and was not yet expected to steer, he found more to interest him in listening to Jed Roach's tales of whaling: Jed told his yarns with an eye to instruction too.

So the days began to speed by until the ship entered flying-fish weather. Even Ben Barrett knew when to let up on a man who was trying. Perhaps he found enough for the time being in trimming Yerner into shape; for Yerner was not and never could be of man caliber.

On the day the ship sighted Barbados, hazy to leeward, Cap'n Turk remarked: 'Concluded to leave him grow up his own way, Ben? Shouldn't wonder if he turned out a man yet. He's the right breed. Reckon I'll have him in my boat, when we lower.'

'With yer leave, Cap'n, I'll keep him by me,' growled Ben. 'He busted my nose twice. That ain't wiped off yet.'

'You better let up on that lad,' smiled Turk. 'You'll never get any change out o' him. He'll likely bust it again, if you try any wipin'.'

'Very well. But he'll be the first man in all my goin' fishin' es I couldn't tame. I'll keep him by me, if 'tis all the same to you.'

While the ship was on the Barbados ground, sperm whales were to be expected; and the Cuttyhunk had to fill her domestic oil tanks at least. Royal yards were sent down, and the masthead hoops sent up,

and lookouts swayed at their dizzy posts all through the daylight hours. Dick found a new thrill in working aloft. Now that he was lusty and full fed, he developed the agility of a monkey, with the strength and brains of a man, and more than most. He and Yerner were first put to tending lines on deck. Soon Dick was up among the branches with the men; and old Pluto helped Yerner with the menial jobs. Yerner cared nothing about that, so long as he was not driven to risk his precious neck. Already Yerner had picked out the least seamanlike men in the green crew, and with them he made his companionship. He had tried first of all to get Dick to band with him, claiming that the pair of them, with their gang proclivities, could soon overrun the ship with her simple greasy whalemen. Dick needed no more than that to impel him to work; for whatever Yerner found desirable had never been desirable to Dick. They had fought many a murderous fight over the same thing. When he came down from aloft wearing a bunch of ropeyarns in his belt with the air of wearing honors, Yerner spat a fighting word at him implying that he licked boots. Dick punched him in the mouth, and measured him for a licking, when from aloft came the far-carrying, breathed cry:

'A-ah Blo-ow!'

Dick was separated from Yerner by the rush of the second mate running to leap to the rail.

'Where-away!' cried Hogg. The lookout indicated with outflung arm. And in a moment the decks of the spouter seethed. Captain and all mates, har-

pooneers, cooper, and all hands were there as if by magic. And each boat's crew ranged themselves beside the swung-out whaleboat at the cranes.

'Lone bull, headin' to th' east'ard!' hailed the lookout.

'Lower away, Mister Barrett! Stand by, Mister Hogg!' the skipper cried, and Dick's intentions regarding Yerner went by the board. He was going out after a whale! But Ben Barrett had not meant to take the green lad into his boat right away. As soon as the boat was afloat, leaping through the seas to the pull of four good oars and a ragged one, Ben for the first time saw Dick.

'Who the hell told you to come?' Ben growled, and half swung the boat with the steering oar. Dick was pulling like fury, teeth clenched, hair flying, the light of battle in his eyes. He grinned at Ben.

'Shut up! I can row as well as a farmer. That's all the others are!' panted Dick, and pulled harder, and raggeder.

Ben kept silence. He would see about that later. For the present the boat was leaping over the long rolling trade seas toward a gamboling cachalot; a hundred-barreler with a fine contempt for whaleships. While the boat was half a mile distant, with the old Cuttyhunk foaming along to a leeward position, the thunder of the whale's broad flukes as he spanked the sea in his play sent a tremor over the ocean. None of the rowers could see ahead. Jed Roach, harpooneer for the mate's boat, was expected to give rowing strokes with a shout, to row

as hard as two men, and, when told, to get on his feet suddenly, turn about, and hurl his harpoon into the monster which he then saw for the first time. And until that moment he could never know whether it was at a quiescent, lazy patriarch of a whale, a timid, retiring whale, or a fighting old rogue of a bull with a long memory for whaleship boats, he was to aim. As for the other oarsmen, they only hoped the agonizing first sea pull would soon come to an end. It did, abruptly. Ben Barrett's eyes suddenly flashed, he bent his sweep, swinging the boat.

'Stand up, Jed! Soak it to him!'

Jed was on his feet, half turned, before the words were out; and with the turning motion he lifted his heavy harpoon from the crotch. Dick heard behind him a thud and a swish of line; then before he could see anything in the upflung spray, Jed and the mate were rushing past each other, changing ends in the careering boat, while the oarsmen tried to escape the suddenly devil-possessed line snaking from the tub. Jed flung turns of the line about the loggerhead aft, and it began to smoke. The boat leaped ahead like a steamer. Men took in their oars and gripped their seats. The foam roared past them in a cataract.

'Wet it! Wet that line!' gritted Ben in the thunderous bows. A man dipped water with his tarpaulin hat and soused the tub. Jed twisted more turns about the loggerhead. The sea was at the gunwales, white, yeasty. Somewhere in that smother ahead was eighty tons of crazy whale, stung to the quick by Jed's deep-flung steel, possessed of a single

idea, to get away from that white sea spider that had stung him.

Straight up windward he traveled. Dick tried to turn to look. It was all he could do to hold on to his seat in the dizzy lurches of the boat. She met the long seas with a crash. Every crash jerked her men from their seats and the gear from its place. Dick gripped the oak and gritted his teeth. He could just see another boat dropping from the Cuttyhunk's cranes, then boat and ship disappeared in the misty distance.

For an hour the Nantucket sleigh ride went on. Then the whale stopped and sounded; dived deep, straight down, until the line smoked again, running out to avoid having the boat dragged under. To the last few coils of line the whale went down, and Ben looked around to give the order to cut. Jed Roach shook his head, speechless with the tremendous effort he was putting into holding the last few turns of the whale line. And the strain told on the whale, three hundred fathom down. The descending movement stopped. The boat hung there, her bows a scant six inches above the water, the line twanging like a harpstring at the stem chocks, quivering like a reed in a rushing brook.

'Haul up! Haul in! Fake it down!' yelled the mate suddenly; and the boat leaped again to the released line, falling back to the sea with a tremendous splash. And the men hauled in the dripping line, hastily coiling it down all along the middle of the boat. The whale was coming up fast. The line said

he was coming up right beside the boat. And now the mate seized his lance, that terrible, long steel on a long, light pole which searches out the heart of the cachalot after the harpoon has fastened the hunter to him.

Dick found the line a snaky demon too much for him. He was not used to coiling ropes down like that. It came in by wild spirals and vast loops. It must be coiled clear; for if the whale took it into his head to start off again, that line running out, foul, would take men and limbs and boat itself in one tremendous horror of doom. But the whale broke water right beside the bow oar; and from that moment whaling meant just one thing to Dick Edwards. The whale. The mate braced his knee in the clumsy cleat, and thrust deep with his lance. The whale gave a convulsive roll. The sea fast turned red.

'Off, off! Starn all!' yelled Ben, and the oars threshed to back the boat away from the flurry. That was where Dick got in his fine work. While he had been keeping clear of the line, his impatient fingers had been straying along the handle of a spare lance. Now, while Ben drew back his weapon, Dick jerked up the spare, stood up, and drove the steel again into the stricken monster. And the whale, willing to die in peace after that shrewd professional touch of the mate's, put every ounce of his titanic power into a dying protest against amateur work. In an instant the colossal tail, full twenty feet broad, swept up, around, and down, and the boat was scattered in sticks over a furlong of sea.

Men, oars, line, stretchers, bailer, and boat were spread like litter. Dick came to the surface bewildered. The blow had been deathly swift. He swam like a fish; but there seemed nowhere to swim to. When he rubbed the salt from his eyes, he made out the vast carcass of the whale, floating like an island, still, harmless, a very refuge. He made for it, and found two men already hanging to the whale line. He crawled up, gripping the harpoon shaft. From that superior height he saw Ben and Jed, slowly swimming toward him, helping another seaman who appeared to be hurt. And when they were all there, and the injured man with his broken leg was hauled clear of the sea, all hands just glared at Dick and said nothing at all.

Day was all but gone. The ship had been barely made out far to leeward, beating against the trades to find them. And though the hours went, no man spoke to Dick. The injured man moaned as the seas rolled the dead whale about. Men shared tobacco plugs; they talked in low tones through the gathering darkness; but not a word, even of reproach, for Dick. He knew he had done wrong, but it had been impulse, and he could never have known what would happen.

Never mind. They could stay surly. He curled up with an arm around the harpoon, and just waited for whatever might turn up. All around the whale the phosphorescence gleamed. Entangled in the line were an oar, the bailer, and the biscuit keg. And streaks shooting past in the dark sea set the

phosphorescence into flame. Soon the whale vibrated to the biting tugs of a horde of sharks. And sleep was out of the question. Dick wondered at the nearness of the stars for a while. A shark, leaping half out of the sea to get a juicier bite, flicked water in his face, and Dick's interest in the stars died. He was only interested in the sun. Never a night so long. If the men would only curse him!

But the longest night gives way to dawn. The sun peeped up, and there was the old whaleship, her stained canvas bursting with wind and all golden in the sun; her scarred sides all glossy with the same pigment; her stubby old forefoot agleam with snowy foam; men at every masthead, and a boat almost in the water. They rounded to, cleverly, so that the dead whale drifted alongside. And they hoisted up the injured man. Dick was willing to wait his turn. Perhaps after a bit they would forget his fault. Ben knelt up.

'Hook me thet thar bailer, Jed,' he said, quietly.

Jed fished the boat bailer from the raffle.

'Ketch holt of him!' Jed and another seized Dick before he realized they were after him.

'Lay him here!'

They laid Dick across Ben's knees, and Ben spat on his hands. They held his legs. Ben's thick arm was across his neck.

Spat! Spat! Spat!

Slowly, with terrible earnestness, the mate spanked Dick with the flat wooden bailer. There on the carcass of the dead whale; the sea alive with

sharks; the entire crew of the Cuttyhunk looking on. And Yerner.

'I'll drop something on you for this!' gasped Dick.

Spat!

'All of you! Darned stinking greasers! How did I know the whale ——?'

Spat!

So on to the end; until Dick ceased struggling, quit threatening, fell to sobbing in passionate rage. Then they hove him on board; and Yerner, after one look at his face, ducked out of sight and forgot all about the clever things he was going to say.

CHAPTER VI

ROUND THE HORN

'Dick, let's turn to and rush this old blubber-boiler!' Yerner spoke in Dick's ear, and surprisingly found no inattentive listener. 'You and me, with our guts and brains, ought to be able to work around a lot of greasy yokels like Turk and his gang. What say?'

Dick said nothing for or against. He went grimly on with his labor. And what labor it was! Down in the blubber-room of a whaleship cutting in a whale. In a hot, sickening, unstable cavern, dimly lighted by a flare of cotton dipped in whale oil, the two bold leaders of youthful hardcase shore gangs sweat amidst steamy blubber and bloody drippings. The whale was being cut in. Lashed by chains at head and tail to the ship. The mates over the side, standing on plank stages, armed with razor-sharp cutting spades on poles chopped stolidly away at the ten-inch thick blanket of blubber, while the great tackles at the fore and mainmastheads, hove upon at the windlass, dragged up the massive blubber-hook which was thrust through a hole in the first cut end of blubber. The whole operation resulted in a wide spiral of reeking fat, with bits of flesh adhering, being torn from the slowly revolving monster as the tackles dragged upon it. When the hook was as high as it could go, a harpooneer darted at the mass at the

rail, armed with a murderous boarding-knife, which was a sword in any other language, and with a few swift slashes sliced the great blanket piece in two. One piece swung in over the main hatch; the other, with the second hook already hooked in by another harpooneer, went slowly on dragging up another length.

And down in the blubber-room, which was simply the square of the main hatch with a floor of hatches laid upon the casks in the hold, was the most stifling, most sickening, least romantic job of even such a prosaic business as boiling lumps of whale fat for the oil. Those great masses of dripping, steamy fat must be coiled down as they were lowered, to make room for the next piece. And it went on until the whale was cut adrift for the sharks to fight over. Never a let-up. Never a moment when the nostrils and the lungs were not offended with the hot reek. And the floor was slippery as oiled eelskin two minutes after the first piece of blubber swung over the hatch. The ship, though leaning steeply to the weight of the dead whale, never remained at that same angle. The long ocean swells gave her a jolly motion which was subtly passed on to the blubber-room. The job was given to the least worthy of the crew.

Dick got his assignment because of the surly manner in which he had taken the spanking. Neither his manner nor his punishment was greatly to be marveled at. Yerner got his job on general uselessness. And it was a job to sicken even an enthusiast. Yerner never had been an enthusiast. Dick might

have been. Had been or he would never have prodded that whale with the devastating lance. But he was not now. He hauled and slithered, tugged and sweat, because if the blubber were not out of the way when the next piece came down, he and his companion would inevitably be buried under the belching mass; for there was no waiting aboard a whaler cutting in whale.

'I've been talking to some of the gang,' Yerner went on, cursing as he slipped headlong into the greasy mass he was tugging at. 'There's a half-dozen young bucks who never knew what they were up against when they sailed in this bloody lard tub. We saw land yesterday, didn't we? Let's ——'

'Shut up and pull fat!' growled Dick. 'Want to get us buried alive in this slime? Pull!'

'Hell! You've got no guts!' Yerner retorted.

'You need all you've got,' and Dick with a jolt of his elbow sent Yerner headlong into the very mess he had just slipped out of.

But the most evil of jobs must come to an end. When the blubber was all stripped, the try pots were prepared, the fire lighted, and the mincers and the boilers went to work while the ship sailed swiftly on her course. The night came down black as velvet, bedizened with tropic stars; and the black smoke swirled to high heaven, the flare lit the sea blood red. Harpooneers in watches fed the fires with crisp 'fritters' — the shriveled residue of bits of blubber from which all the oil had been boiled. Mincers cut the blubber into little pieces; blocks of thick fat

sliced into thin leaves, so that the last drop of oil might be tried out. The barrels were filled, and the cooper hammered down the hoops before they were struck down into the hold. The massive jawbone was set aside, later to have the teeth chopped out, and then to be sawed into slabs for the making of scrimshander.

Then the ship must be cleaned. Rigging swept clean of soot. Sides washed of blood and grease. Decks cleaned and try pots scoured and polished.

It was a week before Dick had time to think. All his leisure went into sleep. And the Cuttyhunk swept grandly to the southward, off the grounds now, her domestic oil store replete, her head toward the grim and blusterous Horn. Dick found something strange about the ship since his exploit. He had been insolent to Ben Barrett; and Ben had duly chastized him in humiliating fashion. There was no reason why all hands should carry a grudge against him. Yet the gang favored by Yerner either ignored him or banded against him; the mate found him a job whenever he caught him idle. The second mate treated him as if he were a bit of blubber; perky Stoll bullied him whenever the chance offered, and Captain Turk ignored him. Only old Pluto remained his friend; Pluto and Jed Roach.

'You nigh lost six men because you ain't used to obeyin' orders an' won't learn,' said Jed gravely. 'An' you wuz purty sassy, too. 'Pears to me th' mate wuz easy. You can't expect allus to find men es you kin bust their snoots a couple o' times an'

'most drown'd 'em an' hev 'em bring you posies. I hed more teeth once than I got now, too, young feller, an' ef 'twuzn't fer thet thar no 'count Yerner puttin' the domino on you with a rock thet night, dunno es I mightn't hev a word or two myself to say arter you 'most drowned me long o' the rest.'

'Oh, you give me a pain!' retorted Dick. 'I stuck a prod into the whale and killed him. You old mossbacks think there's no advance in whaling methods over what went a hundred years ago. I could show you something about killing whales. I will, too, next time I go in a boat. Watch me!'

'Yo' better watch yo' step, manny,' old Pluto put in. 'Ah wuz at sea with yo' fader when he wuz a youngish lad hisself, an' Ah never see him git es sassy es yo' gits. Yo' got makin's, oh, yes, makin's, but yo' ain't no cappen yit.'

'If I stay in this stinking old grease pot three years I'll be captain or dead,' Dick answered, and left the only friend he had at that moment in a state of fomenting anger at his foolish youthfulness.

In sheer lonesomeness he tried Yerner, and Yerner at first repelled him. Hadn't he first repelled Yerner? But as the ship drew south, and the breezes cooled, there was more drawing together in the snug, stuffy forecastle, and less of the little *cliquerie* of the warm tropic nights on deck.

'You had your chance,' Yerner said one cool night watch off the River Plate. 'If you'd come in then, we'd have all been cushy on an island by now. But you stuck your nose way up. Now we're waiting un-

til we get to one of them Pacific Islands. If you want to come in, you can, but none of your snootiness. We all pull equal now.'

'Who said I wanted to join any crooked gang?' Dick snapped hotly.

'Don't be too free with your tongue,' Yerner sneered. 'Seems as if you've always been a bit over the top in your ideas. You gambled, didn't you? And you tried to kid the world you played straight while the rest played crooked. Now you want to join my gang, because nobody else will talk with you, and you —— Hey, Jed, come over here. Bring Lorry.'

Two weasel-faced greenhorns of the other watch shambled across the deck. Yerner was about to give them an earful of Dick's ideas about them, when out of the landward sky came down a pampero, a hell-raising squall that hove the ship down until her decks were creamy with foam and her stout spars leaned to thresh her lower yardarms in the sea.

'Let go all topgallant halliards! Clew 'em up! Down outer jib! In gaff topsail and spanker! Run her off, helmsman, run her off! Jump, curse you, jump!'

Ben Barrett was everywhere. Captain Turk came up on a run, and all hands tumbled up as the ship heeled over. And for an hour it was clew and furl; stand-by and let-go; and the old Cuttyhunk buzzed through the vicious seas with a white mask of spray about her head.

The skies never cleared afterwards until the ship

was inside the Falklands. And then the bitter westerlies of the Horn met her in full career. There was neither time nor mood for resuming the Yerner conference. Dick, in spite of his disgrace, found much to enamor him in the grandeur of the real ocean in its tempestuous moods. He learned to steer when sent to stand lee wheel in a gale. He soon got to know what sail combinations went with the different wind strengths. In spite of himself, he felt the thrill of the sea creep into his blood. When the gray old Horn came in sight, he was all primed to give it battle. And like the hoary old traitor it ever was, Cape Stiff let the Cuttyhunk roll around with her royals set, and never blew upon her one bitter blast from his stormy store.

Dick was disappointed. But when Yerner approached him, while the ship stretched out on her free course to the sunny South Sea Isles, intimating that now was the time to resume their chat, Dick was too much interested in his work to bother. He had won a hearty word from Ben Barrett; even Hogg grudgingly told him his work was good. Old Pluto one evening stole into his hand a slab of plum duff heavy and solid enough to fill a schoolboy or an embryo whaleman. And Jed Roach was teaching him many things. With a leadline, dropped down ventilators, Dick got varying depths, and Jed taught him how to read them off. Every rope in the ship had its name and use. Jed showed him that too. And, treasure of treasures, Jed had an old sextant, and a book of tables. Jed once cherished

ambitions; but figures scared him. He had never mastered the simple art of navigation, though he was a master of the much more difficult art of seamanship.

'You take it, book and all,' Jed insisted, offering the instrument and the book. 'You're smart. You got the head. I ain't likely ever to want either of 'em. And ef you stick to whalin', Dick, an' ever git to be master, why, I'll take it kindly ef you'll keep a boatsteerer's berth allus open fer me. You watch the skipper next time he takes a sight. You'll catch on. Mebbe you'll git a jump 'fore you knows it. Hogg ain't no navigator, nor ain't Stoll. Ain't neither of 'em sense enough. An' I ain't so sure about Ben Barrett, neither. You hook on to the gadget, an' larn.'

Dick hooked on, and learned. One evening, when the air was soft and the seas had turned from greenish-gray to blue, he sat with his back to the brick tryworks, reading the old Bowditch Navigator Jed gave him. The sextant lay beside him. He had little time while the sun was up to get sights, and if he could get them at all, he had no access to a chronometer. So he set himself to master the latitude problem by meridian altitude; sun, moon, or stars; so that he might know that thoroughly at least. His reading so far had taught him that the earth might safely be circumnavigated by a seaman knowing only how to get his latitude. He was waiting for a star, due to transit just after dark. And his eyes stuck to the print until the daylight had

gone. Then he sat gazing up at the particular star he was waiting for. He felt the fascination of it. The sky ablaze with stars that kept popping into sight as the sky grew darker; the soft soughing of the seas around the bluff old ship; the crooning of the balmy air in the broad sails.

'How you making out?'

Yerner crept around the tryworks and sat beside Dick. He spoke in a side-mouthed half whisper. 'Navigation, ain't it?'

Dick nodded curtly. He was watching his star. In ten minutes he could begin to bring it to the horizon. Yerner called softly, and four greenhorns came out of the foresail shadows and sat beside him and Dick.

'Dick's learnin' navigation. Gettin' it, too,' Yerner said.

The rest of his gang, as he called them already, leaned closer, and Yerner rapidly outlined to Dick a rascally scheme for waiting until boats were away after whales, then running away with the ship to some fanciful isle of brown maidens and breadfruit and palm wine. Dick said nothing. He watched his star, listening to the droning of Yerner, only waiting for the end to answer definitely. Darkness was complete now; and in the lee of the tryworks the shadow was a black patch. The rest of the gang broke in with scarcely discreet speech, and Yerner grew less careful as he grew more earnest. Dick was halfway to his feet, carefully raising book and sextant to the tryworks out of the way, when a bulky

shape loomed up from around the works, bringing all the gang to their feet. Somebody rushed across Dick's vision, somebody struck out, and Dick struck more swiftly in sheer self-defense. His fist crunched on flesh. The man he struck stopped short in his tracks for two seconds, and Yerner and his gang vanished like rats.

'Consarn you, you've busted my nose ag'in!' snuffled Ben Barrett, and rushed Dick against the tryworks. Dick had no more intention of punching Ben than he had of flying to Mars. He had been taken by surprise. So he temporized by trying to apologize; and Ben gathered him in meanwhile. Throwing a turn of a rope about Dick's arms, the mate blew the blood from his streaming nose, then blew his whistle for the watch.

'Take this yer young pirate an' lock him up in th' spud locker while I go call the Cap'n,' he said. 'He's been talkin' mutiny!'

CHAPTER VII

THE POTATO LOCKER

Dick gripped the stout wooden slats of the potato locker, which was only a house built under the after boat skids, of open slatwork on all sides for ventilation. It was dawn, and he had stood there all night waiting for Captain Turk to appear.

'Do him good to let him stay there awhile,' Turk had said when the mate went to tell him. Turk was not quite ready to believe the worst of Dick. He wanted time to think. And whether Dick were innocent or guilty, a night in durance on a fine night would hurt him but little. At four o'clock, when the east was graying, the skipper was up, anyway, for the ship was on whaling ground, and he stood before the locker regarding Dick. Dick glared back.

'You're a fine credit to a decent father,' Turk remarked. 'Conniving mutiny in the dark behind a black shadow.'

He got no further. Dick was raving.

'It's a lie! A darned rotten lie! I never spoke one word of mutiny as you call it! I'm not that kind of a dog ——'

'Why did you rise up an' bust me in th' nose when I caught you at it?' snuffled Ben Barrett, glaring over a nose swollen to potato size.

'How did I know who it was?' yelled Dick.

'You sneaked in on me as I was getting up to hammer ——' Suddenly he stopped.

'Yes? Who wuz you goin' to hammer?'

'Go to hell! I won't tell you a thing. Find it out for yourself,' was Dick's sullen rejoinder, and he flung himself down on a sack of potatoes and refused to say another word.

He stayed there all day, and all the next. The mate was bitter against him. For all Ben's riding him when occasion demanded, Ben had always nursed a sneaking pride in the youth; a pride which insisted that one day at the end of a whaling voyage, which might be one year or four, he was going to take back to old Peter Edwards a man-size son. And to Ben's eternal credit it can be said that the reward had little to do with the matter. If anything kept him after Dick, it was his thrice broken nose. Even that was a personal matter. It could be wiped out utterly in one good stand-up, knock-down scrap. But that Dick stooped to plot mutiny with disgruntled members of the crew, and refused to reveal them, that bit deeply into Ben Barrett. And nothing Captain Turk could say altered him one bit. Captain Turk did not believe that any son of Peter Edwards could be crooked, but evidence had to be weighed. Turk believed that young Dick might be a hell-raiser, and a hot handful for a father to bring up, but he would not believe that any youngster slugged and dragged aboard an old blubber-hunter, who could so soon turn from sullen resentment to keen searching after sea knowledge as Dick had,

could be bad enough to merit Ben's verdict. Yet Dick refused to give the names of the men he was with behind the tryworks. Dick must pay the penalty.

And as the day brightened, and the decks were always peopled, Dick paid. The sun was warm, the breeze slight. He had air, but no room. And, when Captain Turk brought out his sextant for the noon observation, Dick, his new-found navigational lore in mind, mentally went through the calculation of the latitude, for Turk was a simple soul, and in reading off his sextant arc spoke the degrees and minutes aloud. Then Dick, trying to recall the sun's declination for that day, had to think of the date. His birthday! His birthday! The thought drove all else from his head. Stretching to his full six feet of brawny height, Dick Edwards, no longer a youth but a full man in all else but experience, swore a man-size oath, seized a sack of potatoes, and hurled it at the slatwork. Then he flung himself down on the sack where it fell, and buried his head in his hands, tearing away at his thick curly hair.

'The lad's ill, Mister Barrett. You'd better let him out,' said the skipper.

'It's temper! Let him sweat it out!' growled Ben, and had his way.

Perky Stoll stopped often to grin through the slats. Yerner, and his precious gang, hurried past the locker whenever they had to pass it. Yerner glanced sideways at Dick on that first day, as if to find out what he thought; he did not so much as

pause on the second day. Dick changed in two days from a youngster sowing wild oats to a man nursing a bitter grievance. And when at last they let him out, he spoke to nobody.

Whaling was poor. It was the season for sperm, but the Cuttyhunk sailed day after day, week after week, never raising a feathery spout. Turk had made the long passage around the Horn on a hunch bolstered by one previous experience; and the hunch flopped. The crew from harpooneers and mates to the last green hand worked on shares. No oil, no pay. And six months out, the Cuttyhunk had the oil of one sperm whale in cask. Yerner's gang had a couple of recruits on the day that the ship sailed through a group of jewel-like islets without anchoring. Dick let Yerner talk, without committing himself; though without further doubt Dick was ready to throw his main along with even Yerner. Anything rather than carry on trying to make good with the name of mutineer on him.

'Have the name, have the game,' he muttered to himself, watching the islets melt into the afterglow of the sunset.

Yerner had felt his feet grow cold while passing through those islets. He had decided to take a boat, if he could not take the ship, and run. But somehow the job loomed bigger than he had thought. He let the chance go. He would talk to Dick again.

And there was Stoll. Stoll was pretty much of a dunce as a whaleman as he had been as a scholar. His father owned shares in the ship. And Stoll was

the man to take advantage of it. Old Stoll owned as many shares as Captain Turk, so the third mate reckoned himself, by father's proxy, as good a man as his skipper. He was not, by a long whale line. But he required to have that demonstrated to him. Demonstration came just after losing the islands. Whales were sighted.

From the mastheads shrilled the cry: 'She blows! She blo-o-ows!' and the ship woke to vivid life.

Five whales. Three boats. Barrett, Hogg, and Stoll in command. And Dick, bursting anew with ardor, forced to stay on board along with old Pluto, keeping ship with old Chips, the carpenter; old Mallet, the cooper; old Sparks, the blacksmith; and two green hands. Turk looking on at the chase, too intent to notice mere individuals.

Hogg got fast to a lumbering old cow whale with a calf at her fin. Stoll, holding his course after a fat bull, ran across Hogg's line, smashed his bows, and forced him to cut line. Hogg was picked up, with his crew, by the slowly cruising ship, sweating curses, spitting brine. Stoll went on his devastating way in tow of his bull whale. Ben Barrett had singled out a lordly old whale carrying the stubs of three lances and harpoons in his black bulk. That was a vat of ninety barrels of oil at least. Ben got his whale. Stoll sailed gayly down at the tail of his newly fast fat bull, and struck the mate's boat squarely amidships, spilling all hands out of the two boats. And Stoll's bull, resentful at being so ingloriously released, perhaps, where glorious death

awaited him, simply lay on the sea and swept his bored flukes to and fro, and turned the wreckage of two boats and gear and men into splinters.

There were two men with maimed limbs to be greeted by the man whose leg had been broken in Dick's boat at the first whale. That man's leg was mended. But the memory persisted. Captain Turk remembered too. And his ship was newly upon a fat ground, where whales frolicked; his crew showed little promise of making a full ship.

Turk called Stoll before him, and before the whole crew:

'A fat-headed son of a blubber-fed father! You lose me two whales and two boats in two minutes! If your father owned the damblasted ship entire, I'd not keep you aft. Get you to the forecastle and shift your gear there. Mister Barrett, can you pick me a man for'ard who's fit to come aft?'

'There's Dick Edwards, as you thinks so almighty of,' replied Ben with a wet grin.

Turk ignored the hint. He beckoned Jed Roach.

'Get your gear aft, Jed. You hev as much sense as Stoll, anyway, and you won't lose me a boat every time you git fast to a fish.'

So Jed went aft, but was not at ease. He wanted the companions of the petty officers' quarters; the throbbing thrill of the harpooneer's oar in chase; the hot moment of ecstasy when the harpoon flew from his hands and sogged into the flesh of the whale.

'I'm goin' to ask th' skipper to let Dick come aft,' Jed told the mate one night as they paced the deck

before the change of watches. 'Thet thar lad knows 'most es much es the skipper a'ready.'

'Th' dumblasted mutineer!' growled Ben, and Dick heard, from his self-appointed snuggery atop of the boat skids.

When Dick went forward, he found Stoll in close conflab with Yerner and the jackals. Dick so came to regard the men who had swung in with Yerner. At that moment Dick would have herded with real jackals, so moody was he.

'Stoll's with us,' Yerner said, out of the corner of his mouth as Dick appeared. 'He knows the islands. There's girls, and no work, and pearls to fish for, and grab your grub from a tree. Better come in, Edwards. We'll all be ship-keepers now, unless Turk has to lower. First time three boats are away, what say? Ship's ours, ain't it?'

'For all me, she is,' growled Dick, and turned into his gloomy bunk, leaving grinning teeth and leering eyes at his back.

'He'll stick! I know him!' whispered Yerner. 'And he's a handful in a fight, too. We need him. Maybe we'll want to sail to some other island. Why not pick and choose, with a ship and the wide Pacific to play in?'

In the morning Dick sought out Yerner.

'Count me in,' he growled. 'I'm through trying to please these greasy masters. Only don't be funny, Yerner. I don't like you, or Stoll, or any of you overmuch. I just like the others less, that's all. First time three boats are away ——'

It was many a day before three boats went away at once. Week after week the Cuttyhunk cruised without raising a single spout. The officers put it down to Stoll's jinx. The crew were weary with standing at the masthead, straining eyes for that single jet of vapor. Through favor of Jed Roach, Dick learned the ship's distance by chart to the nearest islands, and he carried the news forward when relieved from the helm.

'To-morrow night, then, whales or not!' said Yerner. And Stoll licked his thick lips. He particularly wanted to put a harpoon into Captain Turk. That was what would soothe him.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ISLANDER

NEITHER whales nor lack of them halted the little scheme of Yerner. It was a plain old-fashioned gale of wind that struck down out of a blue sky just north of Capricorn and drove the old whaleship foaming before it. She was sliding along under top-gallantsails, with her mainsail hanging loose in the gear, patiently seeking the feathery spout of sperm. The moon and stars suddenly slipped out of sight behind a haze. The sea to windward grew dark. Full abeam it caught her, and, light as she was with her empty holds, the gust hove her down.

'Leggo t'gallants'ls!' bawled Mr. Hogg, suddenly awakened from a nap by being hurled against the skylight. The sea was in the lee waterways, and the scud rushed across the sky swiftly. 'Take in flyin' jib! Brail in th' spanker! Get a move on! Hell! Rouse out all hands, one o' you!'

The ship was lying down until her mainyard dipped the lee arm into the sea. A whaleboat which the carpenter had been repairing during daylight carried away from the temporary chocks and smashed again, floating along the lee deck in a huddle of staves and clamps. The skipper came up, awakened by the sudden heeling over and the uproar.

Gear was flung down from the pins. Halliards let

go, and downhauls manned. Braces rounded in to spill the gusts from the swollen canvas.

'Hey-hey-hey, ah! Roll it up! Give us Paddy Doyle!' yelled Jed Roach up on the mainyard, leading the watch in furling the bursting mainsail.

'We'll heave, ah! and we'll furl, ah!
And pay Paddy Doyle for his boots!
We'll haul, ah! long and strong! ah!
And pay Paddy Doyle for his boots!'

'Furl the t'gallants'l, and take in fore and main upper tawps'ls!' ordered the skipper, and sent all the mates along to help. And the helmsman, taking the helm himself. For Captain Turk had seen sudden gales like that before in the Pacific and respected them.

In an hour the Cuttyhunk roared through the big seas, dead before the gale, under three lower topsails, reefed foresail, reefed upper maintopsail, and foretopmast staysail. It was all she could stagger under; yet Turk dared not take in more sail, for the following seas leaped at her heavy flanks and could board her if she sailed less swiftly. Two men were needed at the wheel; the seas at her bluff bows thundered and foamed white above the catheads.

Two days she ran. In the first watch after she was snugged down for running, the log was hove. She ran out more line than she had ever done before, and when that part came which had not been used before, it snapped off short, rotten with months of damp and tight rolling. The carpenter began to make a new log chip at his wind-stripped bench

abaft the tryworks, and on the reeling deck he slipped, cutting his hand with a chisel. The log was not completed that day. The sun was hidden for two days, and when the gale blew out, as suddenly as it had come, there was a sticky haze over the sea, no wind at all, and neither sun, moon, nor star. Lookouts were aloft again, not so much to seek whales as to watch for land. There were islands and islets and atolls, and just plain murderous reefs, all within the probable vision of a lookout aloft, if the ship had run as far as her broken log line would indicate.

'There's somethin' dark to looard,' hailed the lookout at the main.

Captain Turk himself went aloft with the long telescope. It was twilight, and the haze seemed to be thinning. All he could see was a black rain squall, marching swiftly down the horizon. He swept the horizon with the glass. Squalls, in plenty, the aftermath of the departed gale. Nothing to fear, yet no land either. Good the breeze had gone. Soon there would come a mild air, giving the ship steerageway; meanwhile she was well where she was until some observation could be got or some sight of land be had.

'Keep your eyes skinned, that's all,' he told the three lookouts as he tucked his telescope under his arm and slid down a backstay.

A star peeped out. Turk looked at it a bit wistfully. He had not learned star sights. Pole star, yes; that was a simple method for latitude; but a

star for longitude — he had heard of steamer captains navigating almost entirely by stars, and was not going to say it couldn't be done, but ——

'Thet thar young Dick is right smart with a sextant, cap'n,' Jed Roach ventured.

'Go fetch him,' said Turk, heedless of Dick's standing in the ship, only eager to know his position.

Jed shambled forward. This would be a fine chance to start Dick on the right track for a berth aft. Jed himself was uncomfortable in the cabin. He found Dick, crouching against the windlass in the middle of his precious cronies.

'Come on, Dick. Cap'n ain't easy about his position. I told him you c'd take a star sight.'

'Go tell him to wreck his old ship,' growled Dick. ''Th' hell do I care where she is?'

'Go on!' Yerner urged excitedly. 'Yuh damn fool, don't we want to know where we are at? Go on!'

The other rascals hustled Dick to his feet, muttering in his ear — ears, for they were all around him.

''Twon't do ye no harm, Dick,' said decent old Jed Roach. 'There'll be a berth aft jest es soon es you're ready for it. I spoke to th' Old Man —— Thet's you!' Dick was slouching aft. He stopped at the forecastle hatch, ducked below for his sextant, and Jed waited, following the lad as if the mere handling of that simple instrument bestowed more than human merit upon him.

Dick was permitted to look at the chronometer. He had never seen it before. And he had brought

along his watch, so that, under pretext of needing it on deck for the sight, he had at last got Greenwich time and could depend upon it for a few days at least if chance came to take sights for himself. He knew since reading Jed's navigation epitome that time meant everything in longitude sights, and his was a good watch. It would be near enough correct for a week. He could navigate without knowing the precise longitude, but among tiny islets and reefs, longitude was mighty useful to have. Not like running down the latitude to strike a broad coast which could not be missed; these islets might be struck in the night and never seen. It was good to know the longitude, and Yerner had realized that.

The star had disappeared when Dick got aft. Captain Turk grinned a bit to see Dick peer aloft. It was something of a moment for Dick. Apart from all other considerations, here was a chance to show these ancient blubber-hunters that it was by no means essential to have an urge for seafaring in order to be a navigator. In fact, Dick Edwards felt just a trifle cocky, standing there with Jed's sextant in hand, being asked to get a star observation for the peace of mind of the skipper. He spent the time until the star came out again, focussing his star telescope upon the indistinct horizon, so that there might be no delay if the star only appeared for an instant.

When at length the skies cleared for a brief spell, two stars were visible, and Dick took the one that had not before been seen.

'How about that one?' Turk asked, indicating the one he had first glimpsed.

'If you haven't got a pretty close latitude, you need a star as near east or west as possible,' grunted Dick. Turk grunted too. Dick went on, intently sliding the index along the arc to bring down the star. 'If the star's right on prime vertical, it don't matter if your latitude is out thirty miles or so. That other star's almost northeast. I've got it!'

He hurriedly glanced at his watch, in the light of the lamp Jed held for him, and then a hot thrill surged through him at the fear that he might make a fumble of the calculation. Turk stood in the chart-room doorway, regarding him with something like amusement. Dick took twenty minutes to work the sum; he was not an expert yet; he worked it twice, with the same result. Then, with an air of nonchalance, he scribbled down the figures and stood aside for the skipper to see.

'This puts us 'way to looward o' them islands. Can't be right. How did we run through 'em an' not see or hit 'em?' the skipper grumbled.

'That's up to you,' Dick retorted impudently. 'You asked me to take a sight, and that's the answer.'

Dick marched forward. Yerner and his gang followed him to the forecastle.

'Where are we?' they wanted to know.

Dick told them.

Yerner glowered at him. 'You fooling us?'

'Oh, go to the devil! You calling me a liar?' snapped Dick.

'We heard what Roach said about you gettin' a berth aft,' one of the others insinuated.

Dick carefully replaced the sextant in its case, and went on deck without replying. There had been a thrill after all in standing on the quarter-deck taking an observation to find the ship's position for the skipper. But they followed him up. They crowded around him. And the skies cleared suddenly. Stars came out. There was a setting moon, too, and a fresh, mild air which set the old ship moving gently forward.

Down from the foremast head came the quick hail: 'Small boat, canoe or somethin', right under the lee bow!'

In a moment every man of the watch was at the rail. The skipper and Jed Roach sprang to the side. A man forward hove a line from the fore pinrail, and it tightened. And up the side, nimble as a cat, breathless, and laughing, too, clambered a slim shape slenderly clad in a queer, romper sort of garment that revealed in the starlight a boyish figure with bare brown legs and arms. And a brown face, all gleaming teeth and wide dark eyes, looked around at the dark faces crowding close.

A musical, unafraid voice said matter-of-factly: 'I got lost!'

Heads to the rail again. The canoe, broken against the side, floated astern. The castaway, peering around like a bird, showed no anxiety about the canoe. Captain Turk came forward.

'Lucky you hit us, boy. Where ye from? Get carried off in th' gale?'

'I'm a girl. I'm June, the trader's niece. I got lost in the storm, of course.'

'June who? Where d'ye come from?' Turk persisted.

He caught the girl by the shoulder, turning her around so that he could see her face. She was entirely composed. Not at all like a child lost on the wide ocean. And she was a child, whatever her years might be; apparently about sixteen, more like a boy than a girl of the islands; and she was of the white race, that was plain, for all her rich bronze hue and her curly hair. She was taking in the old whaler with darting glances that were eloquent of her interest in ships. Captain Turk was uneasy.

'What's yer uncle's name, lass? What island d'you come from?' he insisted on knowing.

She laughed again, a bit breathlessly, just a bit confusedly. 'My uncle is Onslow, the trader. I don't know what the island is called in English. The natives call it Fulai.'

'Come and show me!' Turk led her aft.

Her boat was gone. There was no island in sight. None anywhere except away up to windward. A whaleship on a four years' cruise after sperm was no place for a growing girl of sixteen. As he gently shoved her along before him, all the crew pressed forward to have a nearer look at her. There were nudges, and grins, and hoarse comments; but it was Yerner whose eyes were keenest.

'Jumpin' cats! Look at that pearl on her neck!'

CHAPTER IX

TREASURE!

Her single garment was damp. It clung to her like a scarcely wrinkled skin; it revealed her as a veritable sylph of the sea. But somehow it had none of the look of a garment that had survived such a gale as that which the Cuttyhunk had just come through. And the girl herself might have just paddled her canoe out from a beach through a summer shower. Yet no land was in sight. The night was growing brighter all the while; the rain squalls had gone, the skies were clear; still no land broke the horizon.

'Where's this Fulai?' Turk insisted, bringing her to the chart over which she peered with whimsical intentness. At the chartroom door a crowd of men looked in. Yerner in the front; his cronies pushing him.

'Get for'ard! Get to hellangone out o' here!' growled Ben Barrett, shoving Yerner back. Yerner gave way, but his eyes flickered back over his shoulder as long as he could see the girl. Other eyes saw that wondrous pearl, too, though perhaps none so keenly as Yerner appraised its value. It was a pear-shaped gem of velvety black, hung to her slender neck by a hair-thin gold chain; a chain such as old ladies of two generations ago hung their lockets on. The girl seemed unconscious of the fact that she

wore ten cents' worth of clothes and two thousand dollars' worth of single pearl: As unconscious of one as of the other. She traced a slim forefinger across the chart, her lips parted moistly, her eyes flashing, her boyish breast slightly agitated.

'I don't see any name like Fulai,' she said. Her eyes wandered, swiftly, like a bird's.

Turk watched her in blank helplessness. 'Can't you think o' the English name?' he grumbled. 'No place for a girl, this old whaleship. How long ye been adrift?'

'Oh, ever so long!' she answered, looking up into his face and smiling like a seraph. 'I mean, I forget exactly. I ran away from my uncle for a joke, and got lost. You see' — she fingered the pearl carelessly — 'I wanted to find the treasure ——'

'Treasure? What treasure?' interrupted Hogg, whose eyes had never left the pearl or its wearer.

'Why, the store of pearls that this came from,' she said. With a sidelong, tired glance at Turk she sighed: 'Oh, I am so tired! Could you let me sleep a little while? Perhaps I can remember the English name of our island if I'm not so tired.'

'What's this about treasure?' said Hogg hungrily. Whaling had been slack.

'Come below, missy. I'll find you a bunk,' said Turk curtly. 'Mebbe we can make something out o' your yarn in th' morning.'

To his lookouts he bawled anew: 'Aloft thar! You keep your eyes well skinned fer land!' To Hogg he said: 'Keep a-joggin' 'til daybreak. And don't

you fergit you're aboard a whaleship while you're dreamin' o' treasure.'

Yerner, forward, talked excitedly to Dick, while the gang hovered near. Others of the watch snugged down in cozy corners about the waist spinning tall yarns about other castaways picked up at sea; but none recalled ever picking up a smart young packet like this, with her pearl and all.

'We'll wait awhile before pullin' our stunt,' Yerner stated. 'If there's a slue of pearls like the one the kid's got ——'

'Why share 'em with all these greasy blubber-chasers?' Dick wanted to know.

'Yes, how about that?' chimed in one of Yerner's best adherents.

'Huh; maybe she ain't such a kid as she looks, neither,' put forth one of the others who sided with Dick. He had escaped jail for criminal assault by getting himself shanghaied aboard the Cuttyhunk. 'Let's pull it and take her along.'

'I can take care of the kid, and you, too,' growled Dick, turning savagely upon the man. 'How about it, Yerner? Why wait?'

'Why wait, says I, too,' Stoll said greasily. The ex-third mate had been the one to tell of brown-skinned girls, flush of their loves as they were scant of clothes. Here, simply as one of them, he knew enough to side with Dick Edwards. As third mate he could ride rough over Dick; but even as a small boy Dick had put the fear of flying fists into the older but softer Stoll. And now there seemed to be

profit in joining the stronger party. It had been common gossip along the wharves at home that young Edwards had grown able to lick the tar out of Yerner. Yerner never would grow any more; Dick would, and was growing fast.

'What I say is,' he went on, 'wait 'til morning, and see what th' kid has to say. That pearl on her is worth a skipper's lay on a bung-full sperm trip. Besides, it's as easy to take the ship now she's aboard as it was before.' Stoll grinned at Dick assuringly. 'I'm with you, Dick, lad,' his grin implied.

The watch changed before the question was settled. By the time it could be raised again, a new day had dawned; a day which found the ship jogging lazily with the wind abeam, and Captain Turk aloft at first graying of the night blackness, seeking all around the horizon for some speck which might solve his problem of an astounding passenger who had awakened him the moment the dawn promised to break, not to find her island, but to ask him to tell her all about the ship. He had responded by tumbling into his clothes and running aloft at sweating pace to try to sight the island she must have come from. While up there, he saw a sperm whale's spout, and the whaleman rose to the surface in him.

'Lower, Mister Barrett! Lone whale a p'int on th' weather bow! 'Bout a mile off.'

Instantly the ship was alive. All thoughts of pearls were out, unless in Yerner and his precious gang. Dick leaped to the mate's boat, regardless, or

forgetful of that previous experience; only eager to go. And the boat sped away. The ship started beating easily to windward, after the boat. The girl was aft, on the skids, dancing on her toes, eyes alight, slim figure tense, hair flying wild in the morning air, watching the boat with her small, nervous hands clasped and shaking with excitement. More than one of Yerner's lot of rascals licked his lips. Stoll, glad that Dick was away, wondered how he might find an excuse to go up on the spare boat skids. The girl was no more aboard that ship than Dick's father. She was out there, with Ben's boat, spray flying and foam boiling, watching with every vibrant inch of her the flying cachalot a bare hundred yards before the boat. Easy to see why she was not desolate when picked up. Easy to see that the sea, and romance, and the wild breezes had borne, bred, and fed her. Stoll found a reason for going up on the skids; or at least an excuse. By the time he clambered up, she was at the mizzen-top, all alight with sheer joy. Stoll could find no excuse for going up there. Besides, Captain Turk saw him, and Turk had no more use for him.

'Git down here, you Stoll, an' overhaul the cutting tackles,' he sang out, and Stoll sheepishly obeyed. The cutting tackles were tremendous fourfold blocks, each two men's burden, rove through with ropes as thick as a man's wrist. The mere handling of the tackles was a man's work. Stoll had never been a man, except by virtue of his father's name.

By the time the whale was struck, June was away up at the mizzen-topgallant yard. She was as much at home at that lofty altitude as a small boy in an apple tree. And when from the ship it was seen that Ben's boat was in tow of a particularly hasty whale, nobody had much chance further of watching the girl. Captain Turk took active charge of the ship. The mate's boat was flying to windward in tow of the whale at a speed which promised a day and night out for the boat, and a day and night, if not more, of beating to windward in a sluggish breeze for the ship.

It was three days before the Cuttyhunk came up with the boat. Three days of dreary windward work in a light and failing breeze, under a sun hot as Sheol. Through all that time Turk never left the deck. He was a good whaleman, and a lost boat and crew was to him a catastrophe. All that time the girl, June, stayed beside him, getting tired as youth will, but recovering as swiftly; insisting on feeding him, cajoling old Pluto into giving her a place at the galley stove to make the skipper's coffee and toast; bringing sustenance to Turk as he sagged in fitful sleep beside the skylight.

On the third day, Ben Barrett's boat was sighted, fast to the whale. And it took the ship all that day to reach them. The whale was a long specimen, tremendous in girth, until the ship came close it was to all appearances a fine catch. But as the ship rounded to, ready to haul alongside, it was seen that the whale was bloated by gas; was, except for in-

flation, just a poor skinny skeleton of a whale not worth the catching. And before the mate could carry a line to the ship, for the bringing of the whale to the fluke chains, the fish blew up from the gases within it, and sank, leaving ship and sea and sky and boat shrieking witness to the explosion.

Three days lost. Another three days cleaning ship, and not a pint of oil for it. Captain Turk drove his mates, his mates drove the crew, so that, between sleeping and waking, no man had time to think of anything but getting his food and seeing that nobody robbed him of his sleep. To the girl, ever bubbling with curiosity, Turk was gruff and unfriendly. Ben Barrett, sore to the bone of him, remembered that Dick Edwards was on board for a specific purpose, and Ben got his consolation out of Dick.

He put Dick over the side to scrub pestiferous whale débris from the intricacies of the broad chain channels. He stood and watched the job. So did others, not any more fond of Dick. And the girl, June, sat in the captain's boat all day, swinging in the cranes, laughing at everything, but particularly at Dick, sweating there beneath her, cursing not alone to himself, black-visaged and blushing with hurt pride.

Dick finished his job, and went to his supper, but with no fine feelings, no kind thoughts, no high ambition.

CHAPTER X

SMOULDERING

JUNE ONSLOW was a child who would blossom into womanhood very suddenly, when that time came. Born on an island so small that the sea was never beyond hearing of any part of it, only beyond sight because of verdure, she had grown up a veritable child of Nature, kin to the sea, the sky, the birds and fish. Taught by her father, self-exiled aristocrat playing benevolent trader, she had grown up a queer mixture of bright intellect, virile body, and romantic fancies. She had never seen her mother, to know her; for the tiny island was no place for a delicate woman to bring a baby into being, and the birth of June was the death of her mother. Her father, kindly, helpless, desolate in his bereavement, only stayed long enough to see his brother take over the little trading station and the care of small June, then went to seek his lost wife.

June's uncle was much like her father, except for one thing. He drank to drown memories of past and lost refinements of home. Drank too much. Left the child too much to herself. June had been well grounded in the elements of a good education by her father; and her uncle was willing enough to answer her eager questions, but he made no effort to teach her. He saw that she was well fed and adequately clothed for the climate, and so far as he

knew she was happy, running wild, swimming with the fish, wandering at will about the island, the friend and bright spirit of the islanders. June was an avid reader, too, for all her activity. Often she carried a book from her father's rather complete library. Her favorite books were wildly romantic adventure stories of the sea, and of islands, pirates, and treasure. She had read 'Treasure Island' until she could recite whole chapters. She often did, much to her uncle's astonishment; he thought she was recounting some actual happening until he learned to know her better. And she would climb a palm, perch among the fronds, and fancy herself on the lookout at Mizzen-Top Hill, sitting there hour after hour, seeing in fancy whole fleets of galleons sail grandly past, conjuring up small, waspish brigantines and shallops full of corsairs in chase.

Now, aboard the ancient, unglamorous whaleship, she found her heart's desire. She was allowed to roam over the ship simply because Captain Turk was buried in the worries of his unsatisfactory fishing. Until that unlucky whale blew up after almost starving Ben Barrett and a whole boat's crew, there had been some idea of cruising about until this elusive island of Fulai was found and the girl landed. But that was several days ago. And from the moment the mate's boat was hoisted, there had always been a spout or two in sight. The ship sailed doggedly in chase; but never a boat was lowered, never a whale brought near enough, in a week of sailing.

'See here, my lass, you might es well hev a job,

since you've got to stay aboard a spell,' said Turk, two weeks after she had come aboard. 'You help th' stooard, and you kin hev thet bunk o' Jed Roach's. He liked th' main hatch better, anyhow.'

June's eyes danced. She gave the steward no rest until he showed her everything in his domain; and for one full day her work was faultless. After that she realized that stewards see little of the ship and the sea. The stuffy cabin, with its never absent reek of sperm, its scarred table and musty bunks, were no fit setting for a child of the sunny seas and blue skies. She soon learned that helping old Pluto would be much more to her notion of seafaring. And she took the job of pie-making out of the steward's hands on the second day. On the third day she had bedeviled old Pluto into making the pies, while she flitted about the decks like a sun ray; always when Turk was out of sight. As for Ben Barrett and Jed Roach, she had converted them to her side long ago. And Hogg had a notion that she might be fair game if he did not spoil her fun; he let her run. And all of them, even old Pluto, warned her whenever the skipper was about to appear.

Every day or so Turk made her look over the chart, trying to guide her in her search for the island. There was no island of Fulai anywhere near the spot where she was picked up; and Turk was suspicious of her story of being blown off in that gale. She was too fresh, too bubbling over with vitality, to have brought a canoe through that storm and then climb gayly up a rope to board a ship. But he failed to

shake her. She traced her finger over the chart, lips parted like moist rosebuds, her big dark eyes glancing up sideways at him as she paused on islands which were called anything but Fulai, and always gave it up with a sigh.

'Oh, dear! Won't it be dreadful if we never can find my island again? Whatever shall you do with me?'

And Turk would growl: 'Don't you worry, girl. We'll find your island all right!'

Dick talked with her too. He found her utterly unlike any girl he had known. So different from those bobbed flappers of the Point. Not that she was any slower than they in repartee, or any duller of comprehension; she was not. June Onslow was as merry as a grig, as bright as a new steel trap, and could reveal unexpected strength when he held her arm, as he did at first. And Dick for the first time in his life, perhaps, realized that a girl could be sixteen years old, be full of vim and vitality, yet still be only a girl. That she could be a laughing, teasing comrade, and still remain utterly and genuinely virginal, not alone in person, but actually in mind. That she could dress in the flimsiest of one-piece cotton garments, and be entirely unconscious of the maturing figure it revealed; unconscious, too, of the very existence of sex. Dick spoke to her one evening of treasure, gently touching the pearl about her neck. It was a calm evening, all soft gold and pink and blue; the Cuttyhunk headed into the sunset, scarcely moving, all her threadbare old sails sleeping,

the sea rippling along her black sides with silken whisperings. A transparent-breasted, yellow spike-tailed tropic bird sailed about her mastheads; its consort in wider circles sought for more promising food resources.

She laughed, musically, taking the pearl from his fingers, meeting his gaze with great wide eyes like dusky stars. She flung out a brown arm toward the sunset.

'Oh, yes! Big treasure, Dick. Not so far away from here.'

'Pearls like that?' he grinned. Wondrously he felt a complete comradeship with this island girl. He had not, for a long time, known what it was to cultivate a girl's companionship without a sex motive. Here he felt drawn to the girl out of sheer fellow feeling. And in Dick's case, to do him justice, he was as much interested in hearing her talk, seeing the play of light and shade in her piquant face, watching the aliveness of her slim body, as he was in the treasure that gave him excuse to talk with her. She turned from him, gazing straight ahead.

'Oh, pearls! There are islands and islands, whole lots of them in these seas, simply full of pearls. But my treasure is greater than pearls.'

And to all his further questioning, she would only reply with a merry laugh and a shake of her thick curly hair. He gave it up; but he told Yerner, and Yerner told the rest. They talked it over late into the night. And aft, Jed Roach spent a dazed hour in June's company, listening to such rippling chat as

he had never before enjoyed. He, too, ventured a word about treasure, and she laughed outright.

'Oh, what a funny crew! Treasure, treasure, nothing but treasure! And to think of the ocean full of treasure you sail over day after day. Why, of course I know of a treasure. I came to your ship to find it, but we're not near it yet.'

Jed spoke to Ben, and Ben spoke to Turk. They had quite a hot and lengthy conference about it. Forward, Stoll and Yerner argued hotly against further delay. Dick was for leaving everything until June gave the sign. Yerner and Stoll were for starting something right away; and Stoll licked his thick lips as he heard June's laughter ripple out from the after shadows. The crew had divided into two gangs. It was impossible for some of them to be talking treasure and ship-taking without the rest at some time getting to hear of it. The Cuttyhunk had been at sea ten months, and only two whales had been taken; only one cut in; so that idle time had been generous. Nothing like an idle crew to nurse and bring to fruit an idle rumor.

'I say take the ship first time all three boats are away,' said Stoll. 'If we can get the Old Man away too, better yet.'

'Huh! Fat lot of chance we'd have then,' Dick grumbled. 'Four boats away, where'd we be? I'm in the mate's boat. Two of you are in Hogg's. One in Jed's. If Turk lowers, he'll take two more besides his boatsteerer and two old hands. Besides, it'll be a year, as we go now, before we see even two boats away at once.'

'If you be talkin' about this kid's tale o' treasure ——' put in one of the solider crew, coming into the circle and thrusting between Yerner and Dick. And he went on to tell of what the balance of the crew thought. They were all talking. Ten months out, and only one whale cut in. It would be nearer six years than four before they were a full ship. He and his shipmates were for boldly going aft and putting the case up to the skipper. He was no fool, to heave overboard a chance to pick up a fortune. And if they didn't find it, why, it was easy enough to go on whaling again. Wouldn't lose more than a month or two, anyhow.

Aft, Hogg was saying much the same thing. Jed Roach was silent. Ben Barrett had first of all vowed the girl was crazy. He thought there might be something in the story now. Turk was not so sure the girl was crazy; but he believed she didn't know any more than he where her island was.

'And if she don't know that, how in thunder can she tell us where this treasure island is?' he wanted to know.

'You've got the position where we picked her up,' said Hogg boldly. 'You know, and we know, she never traveled more'n ten or twenty mile in that canoe. I say let's try it.'

'We'll see about it in the morning,' said Turk tersely. He turned away, and on the cabin stairs sounded the tread of twenty bare feet.

CHAPTER XI

SHOWDOWN

At any other time Turk would have cleared the cabin of intruders with a word and a look. Now, as the men trooped in, shoving forward Yerner as spokesman, there was too palpable a feeling of community of interests for the skipper to be natural.

'What's the trouble, my lad?' he asked, frowning at Yerner.

Yerner rated small stuff in the ship, and knew it; but safe in the backing of most of the crew, and rightly reading Turk's indecision, he put on a bluff front.

'All hands here want to know what you mean to do about that treasure the kid talks about, Cap.'

'Ain't got but one whale in ten months' fishin',' grumbled an old whaleman, who had never been out of debt to a ship in thirty years. 'Ain't no sense turnin' up our noses at the gal's yarn until we gives it a look-see.'

'That's what we all say,' put in Stoll bravely. 'Likely to be a year before we get oil enough to fry doughnuts. Take a look, that's what we say.' Meeting Ben Barrett's stony eye full upon him, Stoll hastened to add: 'Let all hands speak for themselves, Cap'n.'

'Don't all yammer at once,' Turk growled. 'Shut up a minute. I'm willing to allow you might be

right. But 'tis for me to say. We're fishin' in bad luck. That's true. Wuss luck than I ever 'countered. And if 'twasn't out o' the way I'd say ——'

'Can't be out o' the way!' burst from Yerner. 'Don't the kid keep on pointing west? We're sailing west, ain't we?'

'Ben,' Turk said grimly, speaking to Barrett, but looking at Yerner, 'if that squid talks out o' turn again, run him on deck. Any o' the others, too.'

'Don't try it!' a crony of Yerner's snarled from behind. 'All hands is one-minded in this. Come off the high perch or we'll ——'

'What!' from Turk fiercely.

Men hustled the bold one into silence, asking the skipper to carry on.

Turk stared at them a moment, breathing hard, then resumed:

'This ship set out for sperm whale, my lads, and sperm I'm supposed to bring home. 'Tain't noways strange for a whaleship to cruise a year empty. But it never happened to me before. We've all heard about this gal's treasure island, aft as well as for'ard, and we been talkin' it over, I don't deny. And we're all on lay on a v'yage for oil, even if our shares do vary a bit. One makes wages, we all make wages. If you don't make your iron dollar, nuther do I, nor Ben, nor anybody. So I'd say jest take a look into this treasure yarn, anyway ——'

'That's the stuff!' — 'Same as you, Cap!' — 'I sez to Tom, I sez, Cap'n Turk's a man, I sez ——' So the chorus went until Turk roughly stopped it.

'Shut up! I'd take a look if the gal knew within a thousand mile where the darn island was. But she don't. It's my idea she don't even know how far her own island was when we picked her up. So let's carry on after whales 'til the end o' the year; then, if luck don't change, we'll put in three months at the treasure hunt.'

'Put in the three months now!' squealed Yerner, suddenly desperate. 'What's the use crawlin' around the ocean after stinkin' whale blubber when we'll all be wearin' diamonds if we find that island first? Am I right, boys?'

'Why can't we do both?' Dick put in, speaking for the first time. 'We've sailed west ever since we found June, and she has always pointed to the west when she would talk at all. If she really knows of this treasure island, it's likely to heave in sight at any time on this course. Nothing to stop us lowering for whales if we sight 'em, and still keep on to the westward.'

'To hell with blubber-hunting!' shouted Stoll, red-faced. 'I've sliced my last bit o' fat until ——'

Turk reached out a hand for Stoll, but Stoll now stood his ground. Plenty of voices backed him up. The men surged forward, and Turk and the mates realized that a crisis was at hand.

'Look for that island, Cap, or we'll go seek it ourselves,' Yerner announced, and stepped beside Stoll.

One man had brought a harpoon into the cabin, out of foolish notions of coercion; it had looked silly,

gleaming up above his head in the lamp and tobacco smoke close to the beams. Now he pushed forward, holding his fearsome weapon at a slant, and for an instant it looked as if the noisy conference might turn to more than noise. Ben Barrett's broken-knuckled fist jerked, ready to flash out and grip the harpoon if it came any nearer to a menacing position. Turk was clearly undecided. He was not frightened. It takes more than a clamor or a harpoon to frighten a man who has killed his cachalot with a hand lance from a cockleshell whaleboat. But he glanced in question at Ben and Jed and Hogg. They were with the men in thought; only the inherent difference between officer and man made them stand by the skipper; and Hogg was not so sure he wanted to be an officer that minute.

While the skipper briefly sought inspiration from his mates and the men shuffled about the table, wanting to be bad but not yet quite brazen enough, June stepped from her tiny cabin into the circle and faced Yerner, the last speaker, with a big-eyed gravity that sat strangely upon her. She was hot and flushed, and her lips quivered.

'You are a lot of foolish men!' she said. 'I have been listening. You are all making idiots of yourselves. There is no treasure! There is no island! Why do you big grown men believe a girl's silly fancies and make great issues of them? I tell you I do not know of any treasure. I told Dick of a treasure I knew of: it was the sunset, the breeze, the sea; it was just living! Oh, can't you see how silly you are?'

For a moment the cabin was hushed. Then Stoll thrust his fat body forward, his fingers on Yerner's arm for support.

'That's a fine yarn!' he yelled with a laugh of derision. 'The kid's scared now, and means to bilk us out of it so she can tip off her particular fancy man to it. Tell that yarn to the horse marines,' he snarled at June, who shrank back, looking for the first time afraid of the men. He suddenly turned to the stairway. 'Come on! Let's handle this thing our own way!'

The men bundled out, and June clung to Turk, speaking incoherently to him. He saw tears in her eyes for the first time. But even Jed Roach showed that he was uncertain how to take her change of story. Hogg palpably disbelieved her. Barrett and Turk regarded her curiously. Dick paused after the men left, as if seeking for a chance to speak to the girl; but he turned at last and leaped on deck after them, bursting in upon the milling gang as they surrounded Yerner and his special mob of hoodlums at the tryworks.

'What are you going to do?' he demanded, grabbing Yerner by the breast slack of his shirt.

'Keep this old blubber-hunter heading west until we make that island,' Yerner vociferated. 'No lowering for whale either!'

'And let 'em try to stop us!' yelped a voice behind the tryworks. From old Pluto's galley came the mumbling of toothless gums in prayer; and the hiss of a knife blade on a sharpening steel.

Dick, who had really begun to take an intelligent interest in the business of whaling and sailing a ship, was not so blindly susceptible to the lure of gold that he could not reason. He had thought a good deal about this mysterious island, which bade fair to set a lubberly old whaleship by the metaphorical ears. He had heard the girl's agitated disavowal of the treasure island's existence. And it had made him think, even if it did not quite convince him.

'Listen, fellows,' he said earnestly. He shook Yerner. 'Listen, Yerner. Forget about whether this yarn's all wool or whether it's dream stuff. Just for a minute. Suppose it's the goods. How do you expect to find an island not on the chart just by sailing west? I know enough of navigation to know it's foolish to look for any such fly speck in such a dumb fashion. There are a million islands scattered around this ocean. You can't stop at every one.'

The ship had been slowly moving. The helmsman had followed the rest into the cabin. Now the Cuttyhunk, untended, swung into the wind and shivered all her canvas in the light breeze. There was no officer on deck. Dick realized the situation first; and instinctively started aft to take the helm. He heard the shouts that followed him, some taunting, some angry, all antagonistic. But the men stayed with Yerner and Stoll. Dick would talk to them again later. Meanwhile, he kept the ship's head at west, which had been her course before. And he gave much thought to the problem that had divided the crew. He wanted to speak to the skipper.

He heard voices coming through the skylight. Turk was arguing with Hogg; Ben Barrett and Jed Roach put in a word now and then, but the argument rested with the second mate and the skipper. The few words said by Ben or Jed were clearly born of a state of mind which believed in the treasure, but leaned toward loyalty to the ship.

'I'll hold on west, and let 'em land on the first island they sight, and that's the most I'll do!' stated Turk at last. 'Meanwhile, if whales are raised, I'll lower for 'em, and I'll keep on lowerin' for whale until I hev a full ship, and then I'll put out fer home. I believe the gal's tale o' fancy dreams more'n I do of treasure. Now one o' you git up on deck. Hob's boots! Who's on watch?'

'I signed second mate o' this ship and I'll be second mate,' grumbled Hogg, lurching into the companionway. 'But I didn't sign to get a harpoon through me, and I won't fight no mutineers, Cap'n Turk. And if so be as they seek an' find this here treasure, Bully Hogg ain't goin' to let no second mate's pay stand between him an' his share. An' that's as far as I'll promise. Let others do as they'd a'mint.' He slung that at Jed and Ben, and lumbered up to peer into the binnacle, still growling.

CHAPTER XII

MUTINY!

DICK went forward after another helmsman relieved him later, wondering. The relieving helmsman was one of Yerner's gang; but he took the wheel, repeated the course, and gave no sign of rebellion against routine. Dick wanted to know how he rated now. And he went to Yerner's bunk and shook him into surly wakefulness, putting his question.

'You'll find out soon enough,' growled Yerner.

'Do you mean to carry on with this darned foolishness of treasure-hunting?'

'Wait 'til we sight the island. Nothing'll pop 'til then. We can do without you. Please yourself.'

Dick was sure of one thing; there was no treasure island. He had come to that conclusion. But Yerner and his malcontents thought differently. That was sure, also. Anyhow, if they had decided to carry on until an island — any island — were sighted, as was suggested by the manner of the relieving helmsman, there would be time in daylight to speak to the skipper and get his view. Meanwhile, there was the crew, definitely divided even among themselves; and the mates too. Miss June Onslow had brought plenty of unrest to the easy-going old Cuttyhunk when she rose dripping from the sea with her fairy story of an island home of

which she did not know the name, and her preposterous tale of vast treasure always to the west.

Dick crawled into his bunk to close his eyes and think. And try as he might he could not wipe from his mind's vision that big gleaming pearl that hung by its slender gold chain from the girl's round, sun-kissed neck. That pearl alone was bait enough for the sharks that flocked around Yerner's leadership.

Another day broke, hot and calm, and the ship sailed serenely west. The only indication remaining to tell of the uproar of the night before was a slackness about the ship's work. The mates made no very great efforts to drive the men, and there was little really to do. All the whale gear was in order and ready. Long spells between lowering boats for whales had given every opportunity to see to that. And as for the ship herself, she swam along with her threadbare fine weather canvas barely full of wind, but aglow with sunshine, requiring little attention other than steering.

Old Pluto stayed in his galley as much as he could, and there was always a cleaver or a blubber knife close to his hand. The girl had given up her various jobs. When she appeared on deck at all, it was with Turk, and she was subdued and quiet. Whenever Yerner, or any of his pals, passed near her, she had none of the boyish impudence and roguish glance that first distinguished her. She was uneasy, if not afraid.

Dick waited for Turk to come down from aloft. Every day, at first clear light, the skipper climbed

to the main truck and swept the ocean through the long telescope. Turk was still the keen whaleman. He was longer aloft this morning; and while Dick waited, June crept from below, watched her chance to avoid others, and ran to his side, catching his hand with both her own small hot ones.

'Dick!' she said hurriedly. 'Dick! You must make those men believe there is no treasure island. It was all make-believe.' She caught his glance resting on the pearl at her neck. 'Even this is make-believe!' she cried, holding the globule up to the sun. Some of the men forward caught the gleam of it, and drew together, whispering. Dick saw them, and quietly bade the girl leave it off when she went below again. She slipped it inside her dress, and went on, more subduedly, but earnestly.

'I thought it fun to paddle off to this ship. It was the first ship I'd seen in two years. You know it was awful lonesome with uncle. He's drinking a lot. And there are no other white people on the island. Nothing for a girl to do except swim and fish and read. And there is only one book I could read and enjoy. I've read it until I know "Treasure Island" by heart!'

'But you didn't take that canoe through the storm?'

'No. I didn't see your sail until near sunset after the wind stopped. Then there were rain squalls all around. But I am not afraid of the sea. I wanted to speak to people again. Our trade hut was blown down by the wind, and uncle was — well — he was

not well. He was drinking too much. And I thought as soon as I climbed on board what fun it would be if I could keep going on with the ship. So I kicked my canoe under. Then I was afraid I'd be landed at once. I was glad when the rain squalls prevented you seeing the island. It's very tiny. Volcanic. So I made up a story of treasure when somebody noticed my make-believe pearl ——'

Dick was regarding her curiously. She made haste to drive home her point, fearful that he like the others would not believe her.

'—— It is only fish scale, Dick. The chain was mother's. If I knew about a treasure, I'd have told uncle, wouldn't I? My treasure is all the sea, the outdoors, the wind, and the blue skies. I was silly to leave the island, I know. It was a sudden whim, and I'm sorry now. But those men look as if they would kill me to get even this imitation pearl. I'm afraid of them.'

'Don't let 'em worry you,' said Dick gruffly. Turk was a long time up aloft. Old Pluto was dishing up the cabin breakfast. 'Why did you tell the captain you didn't know the English name of your island?'

June colored, and the ghost of her natural smile played around her lips.

'I was afraid I'd be taken back at once. And I was so excited at being on a real ship.' She seemed about to go right on chatting again; a thought stopped her into gravity once more. 'But I'll tell him the right name now,' she said, and let her wist-

ful glance follow Dick's to the main truck, where Turk clung, legs wrapped around the royal rigging, twenty feet above the crow's-nest, his telescope fixed on the western horizon. The skipper quickly shut his glass, letting it hang by the sling, and uncoiled his legs. He started down, by the rapid transit of the royal backstay, and in the same instant roared:

'Blows! She blows! Lone sperm, three points lee bow, four mile off!'

The three mates ran to their boats; Ben Barrett to the larboard boat, Hogg to the waist boat, and Jed Roach to the forward or bow boat; and they ran alone. Not a man stirred to take his place in the boat he belonged to. And Captain Turk landed on deck with a thump, at first not realizing the trouble. Ben Barrett got the idea quicker. Ben left his boat, picked a belaying pin out of the mizzen rail, and bustled over to where the men lounged in insolent indifference.

'Jump! Consarn you! Git to your boats!' growled Ben.

'Jump overboard! And what are you going to do about it?' came the derisive retort from Blazes, Yerner's chief aide.

The mate was brave enough. He moved forward, belaying pin clubbed; Jed Roach backed him up, barehanded. Hogg remained by his boat, undecided. But Blazes shoved a razor-keen cutting spade at Ben's breast, and even Ben dared not face that murderous weapon. It would take off his head with

the merest forward thrust as easily as old Pluto would lop off bread dough. Ben backed away, edging toward Turk, bidding Jed and Hogg follow. It seemed natural for the afterguard to gather together; there lay safety and enforcement of discipline. But Turk had taken in the amazing situation, almost unparalleled in the whaling business, of a lean ship, with sperm whales in sight, almost a year out for only one fish, and the crew refusing to lower. It had been known, but not often. He turned purple in the face; leaped to his own boat, the starboard one, which was only sent away normally after the three larboard boats.

'Away starboarders!' he roared. 'I'll see if there ain't four oarsmen and a harpooneer among th' b'ilin' o' scum! Lower away!'

The captain's boat was manned by the solid ones of the crew. The last boat called into action always, Turk had no need to be at the trouble of breaking in green hands, nor the time. The carpenter, the blacksmith, the cooper, were his boat's backbone. They were in their places as soon as he roared the order; they had never cast their lot with either side in the disturbance; and because Yerner regarded them as old fossils, harmless and dumb, their opinions had not been bothered about. Dick made a move to join them; then backed away as inconspicuously as he could. He had thought of June. If the skipper left the ship, the girl might not be altogether safe. Ben Barrett saw him start and back down; grinned, nodding; two other elderly men

clambered into the starboard boat, and it was afloat and away smartly.

When it was clear of the ship, heading down wind with sail set, Turk bawled back to the mate: 'Hev a man aloft to keep track and signal us, Mister Barrett! Bring th' ship along after us. Reckon you kin do that much.'

It was a sly knock, and Ben Barrett knew it. He turned savagely to the gang, ignoring the recent display.

'Up aloft, thar!' He singled out Stoll. Stoll laughed, and spat. Ben had turned, as soon as the order was given, to bellow to the helmsman to keep away in the wake of the boat. The fellow laughed, too, holding the ship to her course. The mate saw that Stoll meant bluntly to disobey orders; and that was Ben's limit of patience. Daring the threat of the cutting spade, the mate reached for Stoll. The ruffian handling the spade drew back; not tough enough to deliver the stroke which could mean nothing less than murder. Ben grabbed Stoll, scared now, by the fat of his ribs, and began to draw him forward to the range of the other hand all fisted, ready and quivering.

'Look out, Ben!' yelled Dick then. It was too late. A man on the skids thumped Ben on the head from above with a cooper's mallet, and the mate fell stunned. In a moment more the gang swept Jed Roach and Hogg to the bulwarks and roped them up. Old Pluto slammed shut his galley door. Dick ran aft, hoping to reach the cabins in time to warn

June to lock herself in. Surprisingly he gained his objective. And as he ran below, he heard Stoll noisily announcing that he, Stoll, was taking command of the ship by virtue of his previous rank. He heard Blazes profanely assert Yerner's claim. And he heard Yerner's rejoinder:

'Hold your horses, fellows. This is where we need a navigator, not a fat lump o' lard booted out of the aftergang. Wait till I get Dick Edwards.'

'Hell! He's a shyster!' growled Stoll.

'Never mind,' snapped Yerner. 'He's going to do what I ask him. Take care o' that mouthy mate.'

CHAPTER XIII

THE ISLAND!

'You'll keep your paws off June, Yerner! That goes for your gang, too,' Dick told Yerner, in the cabin. Yerner had demanded Dick's decision.

'The kid can go fish if we find her island,' Yerner laughed contemptuously. 'At least, until I have time to play. Question is, What are you going to do? Are you with or against us, Edwards? You've been hot and cold long enough.'

'Come on deck. I'll give all hands my answer.'

To the gang, gathered about the tryworks, Dick reeled off a chatty little speech which surprised himself.

'I told you nobody could find an island that don't exist, just by sailing west!' he told them. 'Navigation ain't magic. I can't find a treasure island that's only in a silly young kid's head. Sail west! From where? I told Yerner, there are thousands of islands scattered over the Pacific. D'you want to stop at all of them? You're a bunch of rummies, if you ask me; sailing off with the ship and leaving the captain adrift. It's mutiny, that's what this is. You've assaulted the mates ——'

'Cut that out!' snarled Blazes, still holding on to the cutting spade. 'Make him talk our language, Yerner.'

There were growls from the rest, and Yerner bade Dick answer.

'You can sail west as well as I can. As well as Captain Turk could,' said Dick. 'But if you must have a headpiece aft, I'll sail the ship until we sight land, on one condition.'

'Condition nothing!' barked Kopp, whose mallet had downed Ben Barrett.

'Come on with it!' urged Yerner impatiently.

'You obey orders so far as sailing the ship is concerned. You loose the mates. And every greasy one of you stays out of the cabin.' Dick glared at the gang as he spat out that last condition.

'Where's your quarters, Dick?' Yerner asked.

'Aft!'

'He wants to have th' gal to hisself!' Kopp sneered. 'He'll soft soap her and ——'

Dick made a swift sliding forward movement, drove his fist into Kopp's face with all the sinewy force in his lusty seventy inches, and Kopp's mallet flew into the air. Kopp fell backwards through the scattering mob, his broken nose streaming red, and collapsed, terrified, alongside prostrate Ben Barrett.

'Haw, hawrr!' guffawed Ben. 'If you ain't th' nose-bustin' hellion, Dick! Bust some more of 'em!'

Kopp rose. He was not afraid of a bound man. He kicked Ben in the stomach viciously and slunk around behind the crowd as far from Dick as possible. But the blow had staggered more than Kopp; there was more respect in Yerner's tone.

'All right, then. You live aft, and sail the ship

to the island, Dick. If you play straight with us, we'll play straight with you. But the mates stay tied 'til we decide what to do with 'em.'

'How about Captain Turk and his crew?'

'Leave 'em row home!' bellowed Blazes. 'To hell with 'em!'

'I'm pretty sure what you've already done is a hanging job when you get home,' Dick told them. 'If you let that boat go adrift, there's no doubt that you'll all hang. Talk that over, too.'

'Ah ain't gwine cook fo' no murderers, Mistuh Dick!' old Pluto yelled through the window of his barricaded galley.

'We didn't agree to no killin', neither!' grumbled one of the older men. Other voices muttered. Yerner turned snarling upon the waverers; but he was not a born leader of men, and his mere glance was not forceful enough to quiet the murmur. Dick grinned.

'Go talk it over with 'em, Yerner,' he said. 'Plenty of time yet to pick up the boat. And how about letting the mates loose if I stand security for them? They'll be safe then. If they get loose themselves, you can't tell what they'll manage to do to you.'

'I'd give something to know just what you're cooking up, Edwards,' Yerner said, suddenly turning to glare at Dick. 'Don't even think of crossing me. You ain't man enough to whip the crowd, big though you are.'

'I'm sailing you to the island,' laughed Dick. 'As

far as that, I'm with you. And I give my share of the treasure freely in return for the privilege of keeping my sanity and taking care of that poor kid whose silly romance has sent you all maggoty. How about loosing the mates?'

'Sail the ship. I'll let you know in five minutes.'

There was no trouble about sailing the ship. The helmsman steered west readily enough, and Dick, much as he felt urged to, knew better than to try any such trick as altering the course toward the distant boat. The captain's boat had fastened to the whale; it was five miles away already, and going like a motor launch in tow of the monster. Dick stood watching that distant speck, and the helmsman seemed to gather what was in his mind.

'Don't try no queer stuff, Dick, or you'll be sorry,' the man said, and turned to spit over the taffrail. Dick knew the advice was sound at that moment. He made no retort, but ran down the narrow little stairway into the cabin.

'June!' he called sharply.

The girl knew his voice and opened her door.

'Oh, Dick! Somebody has been down here, trying all the doors,' she said in a sort of awed whisper.

'Bother you?' he snapped.

'He tried my door, but went away at once. I heard him go into the other cabins, though. Oh, what is going to happen to us, Dick?'

Dick scrutinized her keenly. The girl was queerly silent in demeanor. It was not fear exactly, rather awe at the results of her impulsive act in boarding

the ship and her thoughtless romancing about treasure.

'At present you're all right, June,' he said gravely. 'And as long as I can bully Yerner, you'll be safe enough. But unless I'm with you, stay in your room; and holler like fury if you want me. Don't squeak, kid, holler!'

'Kid!' she echoed, raising her brows indignantly. But he was serious. She realized that things were bad enough when he wore that look.

'I've not got their word yet,' he went on; 'but I'm to know in a few minutes whether I'm to have charge of you for my share in the treasure —— Don't laugh, June; they believe in it absolutely, and they're hot about it! I asked them for that privilege and for the release of the mates. They've tied up Ben Barrett and Hogg and Roach, and they're sailing away and leaving Captain Turk adrift in his boat five miles to looard. Don't ask me how grown men can be such damned fools. Even Hogg is inclined to believe in that treasure yarn. And I'm not sure that Barrett don't. Jed Roach would believe it if I told him to. He thinks I've got brains because my father once licked him when both were lads! But you go to your room and keep the door tight. Yerner's likely to be down any minute and I want to look into the cabins first. Don't open your door for any voice but mine or old Pluto's. And keep smiling.'

The girl jumped forward and dabbed a wet, grateful kiss on his cheek, then obeyed his direction.

Her key turned, and Dick hurried to search the officers' berths for weapons. He knew Turk had a pistol. Barrett was likely to have one, though very likely it would be rusty and unloaded. Ben was like that. He had little use for the gangster's friend. Only a yellow coward needed a pistol in man-to-man affairs. Ben believed that. Hogg was almost sure to have a gun of some sort. Men like Hogg and Stoll usually carried a gun, or knuckle-dusters, or some such aid to authority.

But Dick drew blank, and it was easy to see why. In every little berth signs of recent and hasty searching were visible. Turk's clothes lockers were emptied and the contents scattered. Dick stepped and almost fell on a revolver cartridge just inside the door. Brackets over the broad swinging bed, meant to hold a shotgun or rifle, were empty. Dick found nothing but littered effects in the other rooms. He wrenched open the stand in the main cabin, which usually contained the bomb guns not in use in the boats. The fearful and expensive bomb guns were not placed in a boat until it was to be lowered after whale. The stand was empty. Somebody had done Yerner's bidding with thoroughness and dispatch.

Dick went on deck again, baffled, and Yerner met him by the skylight. Yerner was bruised, and a scratch ran redly down his face from hair to lip. One eye was blue-ringed and fast closing. Dick grinned at that. But it was a different Yerner now. Yerner wore the air of a gang leader. Perhaps the bulge at his waist belt under his shirt had something

to do with his assurance. There had been no uproar or audible conflict while Dick was below; but Yerner undoubtedly had pulled something on his comrades, for the gang stayed forward, scarcely looking aft. The three mates, too, had disappeared from the deck. Yerner did not wait for Dick to question him.

'I've dumped the mates into the blubber-room,' he said with a swagger. 'Four of the gang, too. Didn't know their minds, so I showed 'em. Now it's your turn, Edwards. The mates stay put where I put 'em, and the Old Man's boat can row clear to hell for all o' me. You'll navigate this ship where I tell you, and like it, and if I feel like chatting with the kid, she'll come out and chat. So that's that.'

Dick measured Yerner up and down, and Yerner's eye was not bold enough to meet his gaze.

'Don't get the notion that you scare me just because you swiped all the guns, Yerner. You can't sail the ship without me, and you know it. And I won't sail her a fathom unless I have entire charge of this end of the ship, and the girl is left alone. If you tie me up, you'll lose the ship. You haven't guts enough to bump me off. And the first man to force the door of that girl's room will get a harpoon in his gizzard. So that's that! Help yourself.'

June had no harpoon. But she could hear their talk as they stood near the open skylight, and Dick hoped she caught the idea clearly enough at least to threaten if ever her door was assailed. Yerner was at a loss. He knew Dick spoke only the truth. They couldn't do without a navigator. Neither of the

mates could take a sight. Even Turk had been compelled to call in Dick when a star sight was required. And after all, the girl could be left in Dick's charge until the island was found. Time enough to attend to her when the digging was done.

'Your trick,' he grumbled at last. 'But no funny stuff! I'm heeled,' uncovering a revolver butt inside his shirt. 'We've got guns among the gang. You'll never know where the guns are until you get a pill, so don't get gay. Until you anchor us at the island, you're safe unless you act up.'

The ship sailed on, faster as the day wore along and the breeze freshened. The captain's boat had long since vanished. Dick sent three men aloft to the lookouts; not with any notion of zeal, but sure at least of that many men less on deck. He had a vague idea that something might turn up and give him a chance to take the ship and do something grand for the mates and the skipper. But nothing happened. The men aloft thought he was eager to bring them to their island, and they kept their eyes bright. When the sun sat on the western horizon, like a big copper plate, they knew he was playing straight with them. For there lay palms, spidery and tiny in distance; black tracery on the sun's broad face.

'Land ho! Land ho! There's the island!' they yelled.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRANDING

THAT was a strange anchoring. Men who had been dubious right up to that moment, following the gang because they were gang followers by nature, whooped and yelled at sight of that tiny island. Yerner and Blazes and their closest cronies danced around Dick in praiseful glee; they would have whacked him on the back ecstatically but for a certain look in his eye which irresistibly reminded them of Kopp's broken nose. The men in the blubber-room, whose lukewarmness toward the mutineers' cause had got them thrown below, pricked up their ears. Mr. Hogg, suddenly assured of his own mistaken loyalty to the ship, mumbled under his breath his altered opinions. Even Ben Barrett and old Jed Roach felt a subtle tremor of doubt run through them at that lusty shout of 'Land ho!' None of them had really expected to sight that island down in the west. Now all of them believed that June's treasure island lay there before them. Dick was the most surprised of them all. He tried to look as if he had known all the time, but he felt far otherwise.

'Get the anchors ready!' he shouted, to break up the hilarity. He wanted time to think. That island against the sunset meant only one thing in the present state of the Cuttyhunk's crew; barren or

fertile, deserted or teeming with inhabitants, the ship could never leave it until it had been turned upside down in a silly search for a mythical treasure. It meant that the moment the anchor went down, the gang would pile ashore. It might be possible, barely possible, that with Ben Barrett and the other mates, and those men now with them, the ship could be carried to sea again. Then it might be possible to find and pick up Captain Turk's boat. With that accomplished, they could certainly take the ship where they liked, and leave the mutineers on the island to their digging, or hold off until Yerner got tired and begged to be taken aboard again, a prisoner with all his gang.

First, though, the ship must be taken safely to the island anchorage. Dick looked in the Pacific 'Pilot,' trying to identify the place. The reckoning was not very recently pricked off. All the places mentioned, of which this might be one, were mere islets or barely visible reefs. There were plenty of such; and the only one that seemed big enough to show palms against the sky was enclosed in a reef, to which there was a fair opening. All the bits of coral or volcanic land thereabouts were marked on the chart simply by crosses, dots, broken circles, or bare specks of outlines. He could not be sure of this place. He had not acquired that much confidence yet, though he believed he had. He was game enough to sail the ship in, anyhow, whether he knew or not. And he knew all about taking soundings.

Men got an anchor over the bows and shackled on, making work easy with antics and joking. The sunset glow faded and the sea grew dark; the island faded from sight with the sun; but they knew it was there, right where the sun had set. West. It chanced that the ship's latitude was the same as the sun's declination, so the sun had set fairly in the west, right over the jibboom. It all helped to fix the treasure in their minds. Nobody could have convinced that crew of the non-existence of June Onslow's treasure island.

'Get up the leadline, one of you, and stand by for a cast,' Dick ordered as the ship floated nearer to where the reef must rise.

There were few men left on deck who knew the marks of a leadline. The real sailors were either in the blubber-room or out there in Turk's abandoned boat. And most of the gang were content to know the island was near, ignorant of reef dangers, scarcely likely to care. The helmsman like the rest was too eager for landing to bother about steering to a hairline.

A man did get into the fore chains and heave the hand lead. It was the deep-sea lead Dick wanted. That twenty-fathom hand lead would give no warning until right on top of the reef.

'No bottom!' yelled the leadsman. Then: 'Lead's gone. Dick! Oh, to hell with it!' And the man leaped inboard to gather with the gang again.

Dick shrugged his shoulders. The dark line of the island could be seen against the stars now. Occa-

sionally the murmur of surf was deepened to a sonorous boom. The night breeze was but an air which blew the old whaleship slowly forward. It might be morning before they anchored. He took the wheel, telling the helmsman: 'You might as well be with the gang. The way you're steering, you're as likely to pile the ship on the reef as not.'

The surf seemed tremendously louder suddenly. There was a strong current underneath the ship. Dick could feel it tugging at the rudder. Forward the dark shapes of the men could be seen in a cluster just abaft the foretack. The island loomed large, and Dick swiftly hove up on the helm, startled by the ghostly gleam of phosphorescence right alongside. Flashed darting away from the ship were sharks, and reef fishes. The gleam turned to the white of breaking seas; the murmur of surf became thunder. And as the ship paid off to her helm, the white stretched away on both sides. Dick had stumbled upon the entrance to the reef, by sheer blind luck.

'Get the sail off her!' he yelled. 'Stand by the anchor, two of you! Make 'em jump, Yerner, unless you want to wreck the ship!' He ran to let go the mizzen-topgallantsail and topsail and the staysails, bawling as he darted across the deck from rail to rail: 'Haul up the courses! Let everything run! Damn your wall eyes, anyhow! All hands on lookout, and ——'

Gently the old Cuttyhunk lurched on a long swell running through the entrance. The island

seemed right under her bowsprit. Yards slid down, jib and stays'l hanks rattled on stays. And just when Dick wound himself up to a fine pitch of abuse, the ship came to a shuddering stand and the unbroken swell ran in past her.

'Let go that anchor!' yelled Dick. 'Let it go!' He believed the gang would come after him, blaming the stranding on him. And to forestall them, he meant to keep them hopping. He wanted that anchor down, anyhow, in case the ship swung clear, and to keep her from driving farther aground if she remained fast.

Nobody obeyed him. Nobody bothered about him. The gang rushed upon the boats like released schoolboys and cast off the falls. In two minutes after the ship touched the reef, two boats were halfway down the ship's side. In five minutes every man on deck but Dick was ashore. Dick went and let go the anchor, letting it lie underfoot with some chain ranged on deck; and the night was noisy with crazy men. As soon as he had secured the windlass and had time to straighten up and breathe, the idiocy of the thing struck him and he stood there laughing. Already the clearer-headed of the men on the beach had recovered some vestige of sense in the black darkness and silence. Conflicting shouts were echoing among the palms; unrestrained at first, they soon dwindled to more cautious pitch when somebody mentioned possible savages. Dick knew they would soon realize the futility of that blind assault on an unknown island. They would come back to

the ship. They had no marks, for there were none. If they really had some clue to a real hoard, they could not follow it in the dark. If they followed it and found anything to encourage them, they had no tools. They would come back. Meanwhile, there was the ship, aground.

Ben Barrett! He'd know what to do. Dick tumbled into the blubber-room, taking the binnacle lamp, and swiftly cut the men loose. Four seamen and three sore mates stood up and stretched their cramped limbs.

'The ship's fast!' Dick told the mate. 'The whole gang's ashore. They'll be back any minute. It's our chance!'

Ben was out on deck quickly, Dick at his heels. Ben tried to visualize the situation, but could not. It was too dark. Dick suggested they all go to the cabin, to talk the thing over. He wanted June to hear their voices, to reassure her after the disquieting jar of the stranding. She might come out awhile, too.

'We ought to be able to keep 'em out of the ship until they come to their senses,' he said.

Ben stumbled down the companionway, muttering. He went straight to his berth and swore at the evidences of rummaging. But he stuck his hand down under his mattress and brought out what the searcher had missed; an ancient revolver, rusty, as Dick had expected. To Ben, it was as useful as any other gun. That was Ben's attitude toward firearms. Rust meant little to him in a thing he never meant to use.

'It'll scare 'em, anyhow,' he growled, trying by peeping into the cylinder to see if it were loaded. Some greenish bullets showed their snub noses near the cylinder end, and that satisfied Ben. He stuck the gun in his belt and stepped back into the cabin. Dick called June, and she opened the door, her eyes sparkled. There was mystery in this, and adventure. Romance. Jed Roach was standing at the table, but nobody else had come down.

'Where's the rest? Where's Hogg?' the mate demanded.

The soft cheeping of well-worn sheaves crept down from above. Dick and Ben and Jed looked at each other. All three crashed into the stairway together. They tumbled out on deck in a heap. Then they peered foolishly out over the rail at the spidery shadow of the third and the only remaining boat, hurrying shoreward to the tug of the four seamen's oars, steered by Mr. Hogg. And Mr. Hogg was shouting already to tell Yerner and his gang that the boat bore friends.

CHAPTER XV

DIGGING DUST

'You hed to pile her on th' reef, didn't you?' Ben growled. It was a silly remark, with no reason behind it. But even Dick could not take offense at it. There seemed nothing else to say at the moment. Besides, Ben Barrett was the mate, in command now that Turk was lost; Dick had but done his plain duty in setting Ben free. Any mate, any skipper, would probably have said just what Ben said on finding his ship sitting tranquilly on the razorback reef of a tiny islet well off the beaten track of shipping.

'Let's see how you'll get her off,' said Dick curtly. He felt none of the antagonism toward Ben that he would have felt earlier in the voyage; before June was picked up, for example. He only felt a lofty unbelief in the mate's ability to perform what seemed to be a miracle in his own eyes.

'If you hedn't put her aground, we'd hev them rats by th' whiskers,' grumbled Ben, still peering into the darkness surrounding the ship.

'You cain't worry them fellers now,' put in Jed Roach glumly. 'They don't care about no ship, or no fust mate. It's pearls an' stuff they'll be ——'

'Shut up, Jed!' snapped Dick. 'Don't you get to thinking that way or you'll be as crazy as the rest of them. Pearls!'

'Have all those silly men gone ashore?' asked June. She suddenly laughed; but there was a note not all merriment in her laugh. It was dangerously near to tears. On the beach the grating of a keel could be heard, and voices, arguing. But the grate of keel was soon followed by the thud of oars.

'Go to your room, quick!' Dick told her, urging her toward the companionway. 'They are coming back, June. They have all the guns, and this may be bad business. Lock your door. And don't forget about the harpoon if they get below.'

She obeyed him, unwillingly, but Dick had little time for argument and was satisfied that she went. Ben and Jed ranged back and forth at the rail, watching the boat, and Ben gripped his old pistol as if he meant to throw it, lock, stock, and barrel, at the first head he could make out. Jed, still grumbling to himself, took down a spare lance from the rack under the skids. Dick wanted something he could use more as he used his fists, and he wanted to use it on Yerner. But Ben gruffly told him to get a lance, like Jed, and he reached for one as Stoll's voice rolled out fatly from the boat.

What it was that Stoll said, or shouted, remained undistinguished, but it was something authoritative, clearly, because Hogg's angry voice answered it. Both were in the boat. Stoll was assuming command and Hogg was disputing his claim. Then words were heard. The boat stopped.

'You keep yer place as a fo'mast hand, Stoll!' bawled Hogg. 'I'm runnin' this boat.'

'Like hell you are! You're one o' the gang because we let you in. Pull, fellers!' Stoll retorted.

The oars dipped twice, then stopped again. Two men were fighting in the stern sheets. Dick jumped on the rail, ignoring Ben's authority in the excitement.

'Lay off, there!' he yelled. 'Don't come any closer or we'll shoot!'

A laugh rang out. Somebody had knocked Hogg down with an oar loom, or boathook handle. The boat started again, and Stoll dared Dick to shoot.

'Where's your gun?' he jeered.

Ben's old gun exploded beside Dick's ear, and he fell from the rail to the deck with the shock of it. Ben was as surprised as anybody. He had fired involuntarily. But the shot had effect on the boat. It stopped again.

Then Stoll's voice: 'Hold on! Hold on!' Men in the boat savagely accused each other of overlooking weapons aboard the ship. Stoll cried out: 'No call for shootin', Dick. We want tools to dig with, an' grub. And if the gal will tell us where to start in, we won't bother you.'

'Dig with your hands, you poor nuts!' Dick retorted. Ben pulled him away from the rail to have his own say.

'Eat coconuts, same es the other monkeys!' said Ben. 'When you're all ready to return to your duty, and get the ship afloat, mebbe I'll consider your surrender.'

Out of the hubbub that arose in the boat, two

stolen guns blazed. A bullet knocked Ben's gun from his hand and numbed his arm to the elbow. The other bullet creased Dick across the cheek, and, involuntarily, as Ben had fired before, he hurled the lance in his hand. Sudden silence fell upon the boat. Then, after thirty seconds of stunned hush, clamor arose.

'You've killed Stoll! Take him aboard, Ben. He's bleeding awful!'

'I never hit anybody! It's a shark!' Dick whispered in Ben's ear. Ben had that notion too.

'Bury him when you dig for that treasure!' said Ben. 'If you come nigher, somebody else'll git hurt!'

The lance came hurling back, to stick in the ship's side quivering. And curses came with it. A harpoon was snatched from the boat's bow and pitchpoled; only the warp stopped it and jerked it back to the sea. But the boat turned shoreward, and threats that burned the ears diminished with distance.

Daylight was graying the east then. As the light increased, the three men on the Cuttyhunk's deck could better see how the land lay. The ship had lightly grounded at the top of the tide. It was certain she must stay there until a full tide. But she lay easily, on soft coral débris that would scarcely hurt her stout planking, though it might tear some copper; and she had found her way inside the reef, so that she lay sheltered from anything but a real twister. The island was two miles long, and less wide; a queer hump of a thing that might have been thrown up by a volcanic spasm. It was high, and a

clump of wind-burnt palms stuck out of the top of it like a cock's comb.

Abreast of the ship the boats lay on the beach. When the sun rose, men could be seen sprawled on the sand. Others were ranging the little island, back and forth, half-heartedly, as if daylight had put sense in their heads and the idiocy of their errand at last occurred to them. Something that looked man-like lay bundled in one boat. Two figures stood apart from the rest, talking.

Dick got the telescope. 'Yerner and Hogg,' he reported. 'That's Stoll in the boat.'

Ben leaned over the side, and yanked out the lance that still stuck there. Blood was on it.

'D'you suppose you killed him, Dick?' he muttered. For once there was no harshness in Ben's voice. He regarded Dick strangely. It was very like solicitude that shone in his sea-sharpened old eyes. Dick stared shoreward. Fighting was one thing; killing was quite another matter in Dick's code. But he knew the shot that creased his face was meant to kill, and war was war, nasty though it prove.

'I hope not,' he said. 'If I did, I hope it was him who shot at me, that's all.'

Killing a man with a whale lance was not soothing to the mind of a young fellow. There might be some feeling of justification, even pride, in returning a shot in the dark and scoring a hit. Many a pistol shot hits without killing; but the mere sight of that keen steel lance blooded to the shaft was creepy. It had

palpably gone right through flesh, wherever it had struck. It seemed almost as gruesome as axework.

'Forget it, lad,' said Ben quickly. 'We'll see about startin' somethin' right away. Them hellions won't leave us to ourselves long. Git thet gal out, an' let her help Pluto git some breakfust fer us. And don't you feel bad about heavin' thet lance. 'Tis her ought to feel bad, bringin' all this here hurroosh on the ship wi' her dumblasted fairy tales.'

They ate on deck, June serving them in silence. The sun was warm, and the breeze tempered it. Small surf murmured on the outer reefs; the scanty foliage of the island rustled dryly. As they ate, they watched the shore, and the men. All were moving there. The bundle that was Stoll was moving up the beach between two men, staggeringly. Torn shirts were strapped about his right shoulder, and there was a stain at his back. The stain was grim enough; but Dick laughed loudly at the shape of it. He said it was the shape of the stain, but it was with relief that he laughed, did he but know it.

'Seems es if they wusn't right friendly,' Jed remarked, noisily swallowing hot coffee.

Something was happening on the beach. Yerner and Blazes and Kopp faced half a dozen seamen headed by Hogg, and a fierce argument was afoot. All the men behind Hogg were of the older members of the crew; the last to fall for the mad notion of a treasure island. The argument was swiftly turned into action. Hogg swung a blow that dropped Yerner like a log. Kopp pulled out a gun

and fired, it seemed point-blank at Hogg. But Hogg was pivoting after his knockdown blow, and the bullet chugged into a boat gunwale. Blazes was hampered by a whale gun. He knew more about the pocket pistol of the gangster. The gun was in the way, and the seamen rushed him and Kopp and beat them down. It looked, to those watching from the ship, as if Hogg had persuaded the real seamen of foolishness and had led them to a successful comeback.

'Soon hev them aboard askin' fer to be taken back,' Ben nodded.

But they had presumed too much on a simple knockout. Yerner came to, while the battle was on; he crawled clear, and when he rose he had a serviceable revolver in hand. And Yerner, a gangster and crook at heart, was a real gangster when his feet were on solid earth and his fist gripped a murderous weapon. He drove Hogg back, and got Blazes and Kopp to their feet. Men who had been otherwise occupied, running to watch the fight, now divided into two parties, siding with Yerner or Hogg; and the majority were with Yerner.

'Would you think men could be so childish?' cried June angrily.

'Let 'em dig!' said Dick. 'Digging dust'll make 'em thirsty. Then they'll come to terms.'

'Looks to me es if there's some sort o' pile o' rock thet ain't natural,' remarked Ben, gazing through the telescope. 'What d'you make of it, youngster?'

Dick took the glass. Two of the men were caper-

ing madly beside a cairn of white limestone. Their shouts could not be heard aboard the ship; but it was clear that they had made a discovery. Yerner and Hogg, antagonists a moment before, joined in the rush to the cairn. Yerner turned, and shook his fist at the ship, then thumbed his nose.

Ben and Jed and Dick slowly turned to regard each other. Then all turned their gaze upon June.

CHAPTER XVI

THE CAIRN

JUNE returned their stares in blank innocence. Then, following their earlier shoreward scrutiny, or its direction, she saw the white cairn, and the quite obvious elation of the mutineers. She was not dull. On the contrary, she was alert-minded and of more than average understanding of signs. Her dancing eyes flashed back and met Dick's, fixed in awful question upon her. She saw the grim challenge in Ben and Jed, too; but it was Dick she wanted to straighten out. She had heard almost every other man in the ship mouth imbecilities about that fanciful treasure island; Dick had never seemed quite so crazy. But here he was, as accusing as Ben or Jed, if eyes could accuse.

'I know!' she cried. 'You think because those men have stumbled on a pile of stones, this is the treasure island, and I have been telling lies.' A flash of anger warmed her for an instant; the next moment she was laughing, and it was a clear, rippling, utterly amused girlish laugh, the first they had heard from the girl since she realized what her little romantic fiction might set afoot.

'Seein's believin', ain't it, missy?' Jed Roach blurted.

'They've sartinly found somethin',' grumbled Ben.

'Suppose you come out with the whole truth now,' Dick said seriously. 'It's a lot to believe, June, that we sailed west, as you said, and found this island, as you made believe we would at first, and they have come across the sort of mark you read about in books, yet it's all in your head.'

'I think you're all mad!' she cried, serious again, but only for a minute. She began to laugh, as merrily as before, until Dick said: 'Blood was shed last night over it. Captain Turk and five men are very likely lost because of it. There'll be a lot more blood spilled on this island before this ship gets away, if that thing over there is a treasure mark. Tell us the truth, June.' Then a new expression came into her face. Girlish anger, amusement, romantic ardor — these all passed as if she had never known their impulses. It was a look of sudden dignity, of something inherent in her now for the first time challenged; the first stark realization that she was accused of lying. She had only been childishly annoyed when they questioned her tales at first. It was to be expected, if she wove romances about treasure islands. But now, after she had vowed to them that her tales were only stuff of dreams, they were calling her liar just because those silly men ashore had found some old stones set in a heap. Dick, too, who had seemed to understand her.

'I know no more about this accidental happening than you do,' she replied simply. Then, before a hand could be lifted to stop her, the girl leaped to the rail, dived into the limpid sea with scarcely a

ripple, and was swimming shoreward. Dick was on the rail ten seconds later; Ben Barrett caught his leg and halted him before he plunged.

'Belay that!' growled Ben. 'Let's git to rights about this afore we all goes dippy. What're they doin' ashore now, Jed? Ain't thet thar a water keg they're a rollin' up to the stone heap?'

'Yes, and seems to me 'tis jest water they found. Likely marked by them rocks. A couple of fellers hev killed some sort of animal, too. Pig, shouldn't wonder.'

'Thet's enough to make 'em cocky. 'Twas grub they was uneasy about. Likely the gal told the truth after all.'

'Yes, an' there she goes, into that pack of alley rats, because we tried to make her out a liar!' growled Dick. 'What're we going to do about it? Look! Yerner's seen her already. I'm going over.'

'Better stand by the ship and do somethin' toward floatin' her,' Ben retorted. 'Soon's she's free, I can talk to them bozos. You watch me.'

Jed Roach was inspecting a bundle of planks and ribs from an old stove boat that Chips had not got around to repairing. It was the only thing left to the ship resembling a boat; and they needed a boat worse than anything. Dick was sullenly gazing at the beach, feeling not a bit under the obligation of obeying Ben Barrett's orders. He was watching Yerner and some of the others, there on the sand where June waded up from the sea all shining wet in the sunshine. So still was the air he could hear her

clear voice speaking to them, though he could not hear the words. He heard the men's harsh voices and Yerner's sharp reproof. He saw June and Yerner walk up to the cairn of stones, and Yerner made no attempt to offend the girl by touch or gesture. Ben understood what was in Dick's mind.

'Ain't no fear o' harm comin' to thet gal, sonny, es long es they thinks she kin tell anything about thet thar treasure. You turn to an' lend a hand here. She's smart enough to keep clear o' harm, I'll bet; an' if she ain't, we'll be a blasted sight better able to help her out if we hev a boat under us. What's she look like, Jed? Pooty well busted, ain't she?'

They hauled down the broken planks. In the ship's stores were new planks and ready bent ribs, put aboard for replacements of such broken boats. At top of the tide, they had felt the ship move gently, as if she were held by the slightest margin. They might drag her afloat with the windlass if they could carry out an anchor. Then they would have the weather gage of the gang properly. But they must have a boat.

Dick went to work on the boat. From time to time he straightened his back and took a look at the island through the telescope. All the men were sitting around the gunwales of the boats. They were hungrily munching the hardtack from the boats' emergency rations. They had water now. How the whaleboat's kegs had ever been allowed to remain empty was to be explained only by the slipshod con-

ditions existing on the ship for a week past. But they had found water. And a fire burned cheerily just beyond tide mark, all blue and gold and violet and green flames from brine-pickled driftwood. A small pig roasted over it on a greenwood spit; and from time to time a man turned the meat. June sat there, among the men, and she was animatedly talking to Yerner and Hogg, who both seemed to listen tolerantly.

Old Pluto emerged from his galley. He had kept himself well out of sight. Now he had a cleaver stuck in his waistband, and carried a devilish French poultry knife of Turk's private belongings; to justify it before the three men on deck, the old darky carried a steel, too, and all the time he stood outside the galley he *chee-wheeched* blade on steel. Instinct apparently overrode fear in Pluto. His broad nostrils quivered as his eyes wandered shoreward. He sniffed noisily.

'Bahb'cue, ain't it, Mista Ben? Seems lak Ah smell hawg a-bakin'. Cain't be 'possum. Ma Lawd! Thar's Missy June, 'mong dem rascals! Yo' all goin' git her? Heah, let me he'p wid dat boat.'

Ben Barrett grunted, kicking a hammer over toward the ancient doctor.

''Bout time,' he growled. 'Th' damn ship's at loose ends long enough. Git busy, y' old buzzard, and drive nails. There's work to do besides scallyhootin' after feather-brained gals.'

Ben whacked home nails, a grunt for each nail. He was beginning to show the effects of all the recent

upheaval. Never in thirty years of whaling had he experienced such a cruise. His ship on a reef, his crew playing hooky on a solitary island beach, his captain adrift with a whole boat's crew, and here was an old nigger cook, hiding in his galley for hours until now, appearing armed like a pirate coolly to sniff baked pig and to see nothing at all in the situation except that same baked pig and the silly girl who was responsible for it all. Ben was getting mad.

The boat was ready to launch when the tide had risen to within a foot of high water.

'We'll go and get June, now,' said Dick, in the boat.

'You'll hop aboard here, lively, me son, an' lend a hand with the kedge anchor!' Ben retorted.

Jed Roach was already unstopping a coir hawser in the fore hatch, driving old Pluto grumbling before him. Ben was chief mate of the Cuttyhunk again. No doubt of that. He had no crew, to speak of; but such as he had, he meant to put to work in his own way. Dick knew the tone, and resented it at once. Somehow it recalled to him all the friction that had ever existed between him and Ben.

'You're talking big again!' he snapped. 'Don't forget you were tied up in the blubber-room until I let you loose. You don't run this ship any more, Barrett. I was in charge when she hit, and I can ——'

'You — in — charge!' gasped Ben. 'Why, consarn you for a young squirt! You're nothin' but a

boy aboard here. Git you for'ard to thet kedge! Go on! Git a move on!'

Ben moved towards Dick, his eyes glittering, his knotty hands reaching. Dick gave no ground. He stood with a grin of cockiness in his face, willing, eager to try out Ben again. And it was a different Dick from the lad who first crumpled under Ben Barrett's weird but effective deep-water manhandling methods. Dick was twenty pounds heavier than when he was carried on board. He was as hard as hickory and as lithe as whalebone. Full of cocky assurance, too, as a whale is full of grease.

'This is as good a time as any to settle the score,' he grinned. 'You go swallow the kedge. Now let's see what you've got.'

Ben reached him with a rush. His great arms made that old circling movement aimed to grip Dick's waist; his scrubby grizzled head jutted forward to get leverage under Dick's chin. But Dick was wise to that trick now; wise, and strong enough to counter it if given as much warning as now. Dick felt the grip tauten at his waist; the hard old skull crunched up under his chin; but that was all. Before Ben could apply the power, Dick thrust hard with both fists, right where Ben's ribs met in front; thrust with every ounce of sinewy young strength in him. Ben's grip slipped. Gasping, for a moment breathless, Ben staggered back; and as he fell away, Dick swung a roundarm left that landed just wide of Ben's shapeless nose and started a gorgeous shiner. There was surprise in Ben's eyes. But Dick laughed. That

ruined Ben's control. He looked as if he might be willing and glad to give Dick credit for having outgrown him; but that laugh was just like the one that had celebrated the breaking of his nose. He rushed again; and Dick discovered that an old warrior of Ben's experience must know more than one trick, to survive as long as Ben had lasted.

Ben's two fists swung now, not as claws to grip, but as hammers to beat down, and one of them knocked Dick's guard aside, numbing his arm like a blow on the funnybone; the other almost missed, but not quite; it brushed off Dick's cheekbone, peeling the skin redly, and Dick went slithering across the deck until his back fetched up against the rail. Ben was on top of him as he bumped. Jed Roach and Pluto, still holding coils of the hawser, stood watching the fight indifferently. They waited for orders, and a fight more or less on a whaler's decks meant nothing to them. Once Ben had given them routine work to do, neither Jed Roach nor the ancient darky cook had a soul above the carrying out of it. But as Ben and Dick clashed again, something happened that shattered their indifference and stopped the fight in an instant.

A yell pealed over the water from the beach. Then shots, many curses, and June's clear, penetrating scream.

CHAPTER XVII

ON THE BEACH

THE gang had divided. The sand all about the boats was churned with scuffling feet. Hogg, and the men who sided with him, were trying to launch the boats, and in one of them Hogg stood shouting orders while trying at the same time to hold June, struggling like a cat in his arms. Yerner led the rest of the crazy mob in defense of the boats.

'Look! Hogg's trying to bring June aboard with the boats! We've got the Yerner bunch tarred if we help Hogg!' shouted Dick. For once Ben agreed with him.

'Come on, Jed!' he growled. 'You stay aboard an' keep ship, Doctor,' he flung at the old Negro. 'Tumble in, Dick, my lad!'

Ben picked up his old pistol from the waterways, where it had lain since shot from his hand, and dropped into the boat. Jed and Dick pulled until their muscles cracked. Their backs were toward the beach. Only Ben could see what was going on. Dick kept asking for details, wheezing the words through set teeth with laboring breath.

'G'wan, pull!' gritted Ben.

'Is Hogg making it?'

'Pull!'

Dick turned to look. Jed's oar thumped him between the shoulders and knocked the breath out of

him. His oar caught a crab. Ben seized the loom below the handle, resumed the stroke, grabbed Dick's nearest hand and set it to the oar again.

'Pull, consarn you!'

A change swiftly upset the situation ashore. Yerner divided his own gang again. A concentrated attack drove the men from one boat — that farthest from Hogg and his backers — and Blazes jumped in with four rowers, shoving off in a fury of haste. Yerner yelled at them, and they pulled out for the ship. Then Ben Barrett caught the drift.

'Back water, Jed! Pull, Dick! Thet boat's goin' to take the ship. Pull, blast you!'

Ben swung on the steering oar. The boat turned in its length. Dick had a full view of the beach now; and he needed no more. He let go his oar, stood up, and dived overboard. He was halfway to the beach before Ben stopped cursing him. By that time the other boat was well on its way out. Ben and Jed took up the race, alone, and it seemed hopeless. Old Pluto peered over the rail, shook his cleaver at the mutineers' boat, but was all ready to surrender. Ben ceased rowing for an instant, took clumsy aim with his old pistol, and fired twice at the other boat. Then he began rowing again, leaving the result of his shots to Fate. Fate was kind to him. One bullet hit the stroke oar, knocking the rower backwards, upsetting the rest; and the boat swung wildly. Ben and Jed spurted, and reached the ship's side before the other boat could get going. Then the ship was safe for the time; with Ben's gun, and Pluto's

cleaver, and Jed's blubber spade showing above the rail. As Dick splashed up the shore, Ben's harsh bellow could be plainly heard. It cursed Dick, and all hands, the island, the boats, impartially.

Dick landed in the midst of a litter of camp-fire and pig bones to find a regular state of siege. Hogg's followers, beaten from the boats, had gathered about the cairn of stones that marked the spring, kindly thought of some bygone seaman who had found precious water and wanted other seamen to be able to find it. Yerner's gang stood undecided, between spring and shore. In a clump of wild plum bushes down to the eastward a small herd of fat wild pigs grunted uneasily. They also were part of an old seaman's kindly thoughts for posterity.

Dick's chief concern had been for June. He knew she had acted on impulse when she swam ashore to persuade these men of their foolish error. He had seen her in Hogg's arms, when Hogg seemed to be trying to carry her back to the ship. But now she was with Yerner's crowd; and Yerner's crowd were at odds with Hogg's adherents. Surprisingly, the girl seemed neither afraid nor uneasy. She seemed at the moment to be more concerned about Stoll's injured shoulder than her own safety. Stoll was making the best of his chances, too. He grinned as Dick came up, not as badly hurt as had been supposed. Not much worse than Dick, with his creased face, though the lance had gone right through the flesh of his fat shoulder.

Dick was wary. Puzzled, too. Every now and then a shot was fired, by Yerner's crowd or the gang by the spring. The boat was back from the attempt to cut off the ship; and Blazes came yelling with his crew; yet June seemed at ease. She even had a smile for Dick. And Dick was received with every appearance of good will. The whole thing was like a stage piece. If the shots that were fired had evil intent behind them, the marksmen were very bad.

'Just the man I'm looking for,' Yerner greeted Dick. 'Let's forget bygones, Dick. June has convinced me that we've been a lot of brainless wonders. I stopped Mister Hogg carrying her off. He'd have tried to take the ship, and let her take her chance of a bullet with the rest, wouldn't he, June?'

'He told me he was going to ask Mister Barrett to take him and his men back, and we'd go back to my island home,' the girl said. She was so completely a child, patting Stoll's fat shoulder as she finished bandaging him; so utterly without doubt that these men were speaking truth, just because they had let her persuade them, and had spoken of her home. Yerner was quick to prevent any chance of Dick pondering over the change.

'We've just about got a hunch that we've pulled a boner,' he said. 'As the kid says, if we'd waited to think, we'd never have put stock in her fairy story. And Hogg made us see, and Stoll made it stronger, that what we've done amounts to mutiny on the high seas, and calls for jail, if not the rope. We ain't that bad, or that crazy, are we, boys?'

Blazes and Kopp and half a dozen others lustily agreed. Stoll, smiling out of a fat face rather drained of blood, said ingratiatingly to Dick: 'You know me, Dick. You know my folks. Never a mutineer in five generations of 'em.'

Yerner went on, glancing furtively from face to face, looking sidelong out at the ship, again flinging a quick eye at the cairn at the spring. Hogg and his followers were not like belligerents, sitting there beside the white stones as if simply waiting for something to turn up. But if one of them moved much, it was from Yerner's camp the first shot came. It seemed to be replied to out of involuntary reaction.

'You're needed, Dick, whoever has the ship. You're the navigator. I've got Hogg tied. Our kegs are full of water, and the pigs are all at our end of the island. We've got the boats, too. All he's got is the spring, and we can get that if we want it. All these lads are sorry for their mad caper and want to go aboard to their duty. So do I. We'll do our work and obey orders, and trust to you and Mister Barrett to make it as easy for us as you can when we get home. June ought to go back to her island too. You see how she is with us. Nobody'll harm her in this crowd. How about it?'

'You know us, Master Dick! Yer father knowed us too. We may be foolish, but we ain't all bad. We was led adrift. We'll go whalin' ontil th' ship's bungfull ef you'll speak a chance fer us.'

Some of the older hands hastened to let Dick know

their minds. He believed them, but distrusted Yerner. He was not so sure about Hogg. Stoll was no good. Never would be any good.

'I'll see what Barrett says about it,' he replied at length. 'I'll talk to Hogg, too. If we get the ship afloat, we need all hands. Besides, Yerner, no matter what Ben Barrett promises to do about you lunatics, there's still the matter of Cap'n Turk and his boat's crew. That's likely to be called murder. I'll do what I can, and let you know before dark. Come along, June.'

Yerner and Stoll moved to place June between them. Each glared at the other, but both met Dick with the same smooth cunning.

'Let the little lady stay with us,' Yerner suggested. 'She'll be a sort of guaranty for us, you know, Dick. We savvee the sort of mess we're in, and you made it clearer talkin' about Turk. Damned if I hadn't forgot him.'

'You want to stay with us, don't you, girlie?' Stoll purred, sliding his fleshy hand along her arm. June shrank from his touch; trouble darkened her eyes again. She half wistfully smiled at Dick, who was regarding her queerly. He was just getting the meaning of their apparent decency toward her. She had come ashore to show them their error, and they now held her as a hostage.

'I want to go to the ship,' she said. 'I want to go home.'

'Come on, then,' said Dick, and reached for her hand. Yerner interposed, still grinning smoothly,

but unmistakably determined to hold on to his hostage.

'Nothing doing!' he snapped. 'June's our ace in the hole.'

'I won't go aboard without her,' Dick retorted.

'Then you'll both stay ashore until I try my luck on the mate.'

'We'll see!' Dick growled, and reached for June's hand again.

'Huh! Don't waste wind on th' sucker!' snarled Blazes. 'We can eat them three aboard.' He thrust himself menacingly against Dick.

'Let go of her, Yerner,' Dick warned, elbowing Blazes aside contemptuously. Yerner drew back, taking June with him, and Kopp stepped forward. Then Dick went mad. Yerner's grin had acted similarly before. Blazes struck at his head with a clubbed gun as Kopp came in range of his fist. Dick's hefty punch lifted Kopp from his feet and dropped him, and the effect carried Dick out from under Blazes's murderous blow. It carried him right in front of Yerner, to Yerner's utter surprise; and June twisted free just soon enough for Yerner to half guard his jaw from another of Dick's deadly right hooks.

Dick had fought Yerner often before, as boy and growing youth. He had always whipped him. And now Dick had changed into a full man, while Yerner remained pretty much the same sort of rat he had always been. Dick's half-stopped punch sent Yerner reeling. Another, swiftly following, brought Yer-

ner's hands up before his face to guard. Then Dick went to work on his ribs; and hammered at them so fast that Yerner's breath was walloped into sobs, and Yerner's hands forgot defense and tried to drag out a gun from a pocket he could never reach because of those hammering fists.

Dick was happy in that moment. He knew Yerner was trying for his gun, and he took keen zest in the fact that he could hit hard and fast enough to render even a gun useless. Yerner had landed a punch or two himself, before going for the gun. Dick's bullet-creased face and the cheek-bone scraped by old Ben Barrett, streamed blood. June, standing outside the crowd, her hands pressed, nervously working, under her chin, had her lips parted to cry out; marvelously she found she did not want to cry out. Blood streaked Dick's face until he looked like a red demon; yet he was laughing through the red. It was a real laugh. None of your rat grins of a desperate man.

The crowd acted queerly. Dick was thoroughly absorbed in the pleasant job of hammering Yerner; but he knew enough to expect the others to jump in and help their leader. That was why he kept stepping around Yerner like a cooper around a cask. But nobody walloped him from behind. Instead, some of the men appeared to be standing off others. Four men kept Kopp and Blazes away. Hogg and his men at the spring had stepped down to midway of the beach. There were no shots fired. Two bomb guns were among Yerner's crowd; murderous things

capable of turning the tide of any gang fight. And they were in the hands of Kopp and Blazes, the very men to make use of them. Yet they were not discharged.

Other pistols were among the gang. Dick knew that. How many, he didn't know. All he knew was that Yerner was trying to pull one on him, and that one suddenly appeared. Dick floored his foe with what ought to have been the old K.O. Yerner was slipping when it landed, and it only dazed him. But Dick stood back, and in that instant Yerner got his gun and fired from the sand.

CHAPTER XVIII

RED SAND

WHILE the fight was going on, and some of Yerner's men wanted to pile in and help him while others prevented them, Hogg and his gang came down closer until they were between the scene of action and the beached boats. Hogg had a pistol; the rest of the men seemed unarmed, except two who carried regular boat harpoons on long hickory poles. Deadly things that required either a murderer or a desperate cornered man to use upon another man. All that had prevented the island madness becoming a shambles was that reluctance to use such grim weapons in daylight and cold blood, and the lucky circumstance of the bomb guns being in one camp and all the bombs in the other. The same was true of the pistols. Yerner had all the small arms except Hogg's; and except for the one shot remaining in Yerner's gun, Hogg had all the cartridges. Nobody knew just how that matter stood, though Yerner knew he had fired his last shot at Dick that instant. Hogg was not to know it. And Yerner or his crowd could not know that Hogg's bulldog held just two shells. But that was how matters stood, and that was why no pitched gun battle had started.

Yerner's shot crashed out, and then a dead silence fell over all, which was not due to the result of the shot alone. June had uttered one sharp cry, then

stood aghast. She could see beyond Dick. At the moment when Yerner went down from that last punch, Blazes had swung clear of interference and lifted his bomb gun like a mighty club to crown Dick. One of Hogg's harpooneers, a man who had seen much of good in Dick Edwards and was long since well ashamed of himself for a fool, saw the blow about to fall and shouted warning. Not leaving the warning to act alone, the man stepped forward, poised his harpoon as in pitchpoling for a whale over an intervening boat, and hove it in a high arc. The barb and shaft sank to the hitches between Blazes's shoulder blades, drove him to earth, and pinned him there. Blazes was dead before he hit sand.

The clubbed gun fell, sending Dick forward at the instant Yerner fired, and Yerner's shot tore through the leaves of a palm by the spring. Dick fell upon Yerner, and knocked all remaining wind and fight out of the man. The pistol fell, and Dick secured it. In the hush that followed the ghastly harpoon stroke, men shifted furtively until they were readjusted in two parties not the same as before. Dick got to his feet, still dizzy; but he saw the changing faces of the men; all the men of whom there had been any doubt had joined Hogg, and the rest, crowding around Kopp, edged toward Yerner and faced the others like cornered rats.

'June! Swim to the ship!' Dick whispered, stepping to her side. 'There's going to be a bad fight here. Can you do it? Tell Ben and Jed to come. There won't be a man left to get the ship off unless

we can stop this. It isn't treasure any more, it's plain blood madness! Hurry! And don't you come back.'

The girl darted away like a deer. Dick saw her reach deep water and then felt that she was safe, for she swam like a fish. Stoll had taken himself off to a safe distance, and from there was watching and waiting, ready to cast his lot with whichever gang should prove stronger. His hurt rendered him non-combatant, unless he found some safe weapon ready to his hand and saw a chance to use it without risk to himself.

Yerner pulled himself to his feet with help, and swiftly realized the situation. For the first time, his was the lesser gang, though still the toughest in character. Men were cursing each other in quiet, deadly tones. The harpooneer who had struck Blazes down was trying to recover his harpoon. With a foot on the dead man's back, he tried to pull out the steel, and the barb held. When he tugged, grunting, blood spurted, splashing the nearest men. He cursed the dead man, feeling he had a right to curse even the dead when the dead was Blazes; and that frightened a fellow close at hand who could never have been tough or even mildly bad except in the imaginary security of the pack. The man whimpered, and hit the harpooneer with his fist.

In a breath the mad mob were hitting wherever a head came within reach. The milling was too close for much damage to be done, but noses bled, and faces lost their shape, and Yerner, feeling the loss of

his pistol, dodged around the outskirts of the riot, eluding Hogg, who was after him, and dealing out a kick or a punch wherever he saw a chance to his advantage. Dick, too, remained outside, looking on. He had discovered Yerner's gun was empty. He saw that this fight was going to last until men dropped from sheer weariness, for Hogg had held back the other harpooneer, and weapons were scarce for close combat. June was alongside the ship. They were lowering a pilot ladder to her. Along the beach the boats lay as they had been left; one in safety, high and dry, the other already moving on the little ripples as the tide crept up. The sun was at the western sea rim; in the east the horizon already held the velvety black glow of a peaceful tropic night. The moon, but two days from full, hung there in the dusky setting like a silver shield; like the silver shield of a goddess advancing upon the flaming gold of the retreating sun, whose fierce glory perforce died with the day. The sea was blue as the eyes of innocence, and tranquil as a silent blessing. Only the softest of sweet breezes stirred the palms; the murmur of the surf on the outer reefs had no more disturbing quality than soft singing. That old whaleship out there held in her faded paint and metal the mellow color of a grand old painting. Yet from her decks had come these cursing, rioting madmen who made the lovely picture an obscene daub.

Dick swiftly made up his mind. He followed the battle until he overtook Hogg, who faced him uncertainly, his own gun ready, seeing that Dick carried one.

'It's empty,' Dick grunted. 'Want to talk to you, Hogg.'

'Heave ahead,' Hogg replied. 'Mine's empty too, though I ain't tellin' everybody.'

'Listen. Can you pick out the men who hadn't quite gone crazy when Yerner forced us to desert the skipper?'

'I know 'em. How can anybody pick 'em out? Look at 'em. It's gettin' dark, too.' Hogg disgustedly waved a hand at the fight. Men simply punched the nearest man. Yerner and Kopp both knelt on a man on the sand, gouging him, driving his face into the grit. It was the harpooneer who had killed Blazes.

'Ben and Jed'll be here any minute now,' Dick said. 'If you can separate 'em in the half light, and do as I tell you, I'll promise to make good terms for you. I won't do a damned thing to help any of the rats who left Turk to die.'

'What d'ye want done? I'll get most of 'em. They're all set to give in since noon to-day.'

'Send four or six along to the boats. Tell 'em to launch the one that's hauled up and shove her afloat just at the edge of the tide, oars all ready to give way. Tell 'em to see the other boat don't drift away. Two men can stand by her. Look! There's the mate and Jed now. Heading right in for the scrap. Hurry your men along before Yerner's crowd get the idea the ship's deserted out there!'

Hogg was wise. He picked out men who had backed out of the fray with dripping noses or fat

ears; men not used to fighting by wholesale. There are many such men in this world, who will fight and deal out punishment as long as their own noses are not blooded. It was no trouble to find six tired men whose vitality returned at a whisper that their foolishness might yet be forgiven if they acted smartly now. They melted in the growing darkness alongshore just before the keel of Ben Barrett's boat grated on the beach.

'Show your gun, Hogg, and back me up!' Dick ordered. The readiness with which men had been found to quit fighting on promise of intercession amazed him and gave him a grand idea. He would finish this thing up without Ben's help. He took out his own empty pistol. 'Come on!' he shouted, and pushed through the mob until he stuck his gun against Yerner's ribs.

'Don't move, Yerner, it's loaded now!' he said. 'Call your men off!'

Hogg attended to Kopp. And when those two men were taken care of, there was no fight in the rest. Ben Barrett and Jed came up, Ben swinging his old gun, Jed flourishing one of Pluto's cleavers. It was night now; but the great moon lighted the beach.

'Here's the tally, Ben!' Dick cried boastfully. 'You're a bit late. All tamed, they are, ain't ——?'

'Like hell they are!' snapped Yerner, suddenly breaking away. He gambled that Dick lied about the gun, and was right. He shouted to his men by name, and darted along toward the boats, two or

three men daring to follow. No shots followed them, for Ben was no sharpshooter.

'Seems you're a mite too previous!' growled Ben, trying to distinguish faces as he faced the moonlight. Another row broke out down the beach.

'Come on down to the boats!' said Dick, recovering his wits and assuming a fine air of nonchalance. 'My men down there will take care of Yerner 'til we get there.'

CHAPTER XIX

TURK COMES BACK

THE men who ran with Yerner dodged inland when they saw the men already at the boats; they stayed when the crowd embarked. But a few moments' thought, after they saw the boats put off for the ship, brought them back, shouting to be taken aboard, preferring what chances might be theirs to solitary lordship of a tiny islet whose only treasure had proved to be a spring of precious water.

And when they got aboard the ship, and Ben Barrett put them to work carrying out the kedge anchor, they obeyed him, red noses, black eyes, thick ears and all. Ben would have listened to Jed and old Pluto and clapped most of them in irons; but Dick countered that advice with the better suggestion that they be made to work first. So through the moonlit night they sweated in boat and at capstan, heaving in on the great cutting tackles applied to the kedge hawser, fleeting the tackles and heaving again, until the tide was at its height. They were subdued mutineers by that time. Ben had not been overkind to them. He promised them food when the job was done, no more.

'Now, put yer backs to it an' heave her off!' he growled, and the weary grind began again.

Yerner and some of his intimate creatures hung

on their work, too cunning to kill themselves; it only doubled the labor of the rest.

'Heave, you lumps!' snarled Ben, and passed around the straining backs with a knotted rope-end. 'Ef you don't shift her this tide, she'll stay here for good. Now, heave!'

That possibility seemed to arouse the shirkers. Yerner himself added his urgent note. What he actually said to the men nearest to him, which was in turn passed on, was not very loud, but the capstan suddenly began to turn with clattering pawls, the tackles creaked, and at the very peak of high water the old Cuttyhunk slid off the reef and floated stern first to the kedge.

'Get th' kedge aboard an' let-go th' port anchor. Daylight's th' time to run through thet reef again,' Ben ordered. Then, when the ship lay easily at her anchor, and men began to steal toward shady corners to rest, Ben tried the pump well to see if the ship leaked after the stranding. There was a trickle.

'Pump, me sons! Rattle her clear o' water, then you may ketch a snooze, mebbe. If 'tis daylight, you'll take her to sea fust. Shake a leg, now.'

When the dog-tired men at last turned in, it was within two hours of dawn; the ship was dry and secure, and the men so beaten they could not have defied the cook. A few of them had gall enough to mention grog, but none insisted. Three men had not worked themselves to dead weariness; Ben, Jed, and Dick looked too freshly formidable to quarrel with again so soon. Dick stayed aft, feeling he belonged

there; and Ben, resenting the presumption, still kept quiet because of the need for peace, at least until the ship got safely to sea. He would put Dick in his place when the deep ocean rolled under the Cuttyhunk and Skipper Ben Barrett was in command.

Jed Roach turned in, as soon as he was told he was not on watch. Ben lay on the bare deck beside the potato locker; Dick walked back and forth in bare feet, keeping lookout, or anchor watch, scarcely noticing what he was doing, but revolving over in his mind his own situation. He had been put in command of the ship by mutineers because he knew a little navigation. Ben would need him for that same reason. Ben would have to be a darned sight more appreciative. Who was it brought the gang to terms, anyhow?

As for Ben's thoughts — well, that weather-beaten old shellback fell asleep as readily as a dog, and about as soundly; and it only required the space of a half-dozen deep breaths just as he closed his eyes for him to decide what his course would best be: he'd take the ship to Papeete, or Suva, or whichever regular port turned out to be handiest, land the mutineers and that fool of a girl, and ship a new mate who could navigate, then go to whaling again. Meanwhile, the gang would work the ship; he'd keep 'em busy; if they chose to believe he'd forget their sins because they worked, that was all right, but Ben Barrett's memory was not that brittle. Down in the black forecastle Yerner and Kopp and

two others whispered while others slept. They whispered of working, just as the mate had decided. They muttered about the port they'd make, the same as he had. But the rest of their conference was not to be broadcast. It might have concerned whaling; but probably did not, since it sent them to sleep for the little remaining time in chuckling mood, and neither of them cared much for whaling. Hogg had been forced to sleep in the steerage, the boat-steerers' quarters; the mate would not have him aft, and Yerner distrusted him; and, depending on Dick's good offices, Hogg had worked himself weary and slept dreamlessly. Stoll wanted to be with Yerner, but had the idea he ought to rate higher in the council than Yerner agreed to. He'd take his rightful place in good time. For the present they couldn't make him work very hard, with that perforated and inflamed shoulder. Stoll could easily be in a position to pick up valuable scraps of news, between for'ard and aft.

Dick trod the deck softly. The moon still ruled the sky, but was slipping westward; soon the east would turn gray and the stars would fade. There was a little tremor under-running the ship as the tide swirled through the reef break. He had no means of knowing what Ben Barrett would do, but Dick was cool now, and the half-hour just preceding the dawn is always conducive to hard reality in thought; certainly Ben was skipper, and until displaced must order the ship's course. Unless Dick chose to refuse and become a mutineer in fact, or at

least an insubordinate, he must give Ben the benefit of what knowledge he had picked up and help carry the ship to port. But he did hope the mate would go back over the track they had sailed and take June to her island home. Dick was anxious about June. Something had happened to him there on the island. He had looked upon June as a kid before; a good sport, a bully pal, but only a kid; now he knew she was a girl. It had gone no farther than that, perhaps; but that was something for Dick Edwards to realize, who had known only one sort of girl in those other days, the sort that only sex and unlimited capacity for gin distinguished from fellows. He and his kind rarely thought of those as girls. They were flappers, flossies, skirts, fluffs, tanks — almost anything but girls. For the first time, seriously, Dick Edwards thought of a girl as something clean, and sweet, and utterly fine; and he wanted to know where June Onslow could be found later on. Why, it might be worth while to start right in, when she was safely with her folks again, and so tackle this business of whaling that he'd get command very quickly. He knew his father had commanded a vessel at twenty-one. Of course, his father was an uncommon man. Everybody in the business knew that. Even Captain Turk respected old Peter Edwards. Rumor had it that Peter Edwards not only taught Ben Barrett the business of catching sperm whales, but was the only living man who ever licked Ben in a stand-up, knock-down fight. Well, that might be. Dick was too late to

teach Ben his business, but he wasn't too late to lick him in a scrap. That reminded him. They had been in the middle of a grand set-to when interrupted by that uproar on the beach. And Dick was dealing out as good as he received, if not better. Perhaps Ben Barrett was not so hot. Why let him take command? He had to come to Dick for navigation. That was an idea.

The dawn had crept up unnoticed while Dick paced under the skids. Now the glow of the sun itself began to redden the horizon. He had been ordered to call all hands at daybreak. He must do better than this, if he was ever to attain command. He went to the galley first, and shook old Pluto awake.

'Shake a leg, Doctor! If the mate don't get coffee in ten minutes, you'll be a sick nigger!'

'Yassuh, Mista Dick,' mumbled Pluto, groping for kindling. Dick was on his way to call the hands, Pluto passing him on his way to the wood locker. Whaling had been so bad there had never been blubber scrap enough to start fires. As Dick stuck his leg over the hatch coaming, feeling for the top batten, Pluto turned with his arms full of shavings and splinters from the carpenter's bench. And suddenly Pluto dropped the wood; his vast mouth dropped open, and his eyes stared from his black face like spotted eggs.

'Ma Gawd!' he gasped, staring over Dick's head. 'Oh, ma deah Lawd! Delibber us frum evul, Amen!'

Dick turned. His own eyes popped. Clambering

stiffly over the rail, tired and hard breathing, but glittering of eye, came Captain Turk in the flesh. And more stiffly, more tired, the cooper, and Chips, and the blacksmith, and the steward, and Folger the boatsteerer.

'Give us some coffee, quick, hot and strong!' Turk grated at Pluto. Then, peering at Dick as if unable yet clearly to identify him, though the sun now lit up the sea. 'Fetch up them dumblasted mates o' mine! Sail away and leave a boat!' As Dick hurried away, Turk rasped out after him: 'Wake 'em gently! Don't upset 'em, the hellions!'

Dick ran to shake up Ben Barrett.

'Come up, lively! The Old Man's just come aboard; he's all in and looking for your blood!'

Ben faced the skipper half defiantly. After all, what could any man have done more than he had?

'Where's the other pair o' bloody deserters?' snapped Turk.

Dick brought out Jed Roach, and ducked below to rouse out the rest. Ben stopped him at the hatch, before answering the skipper.

'Hold on, Dick! Let th' Cap'n rouse 'em.' Then Ben told the tale, shortly and graphically.

'Only floated th' ship couple o' hours ago,' he concluded. 'Meant to cruise awhile lookin' arter you, Cap'n Turk, before headin' in to land th' scum.'

'We et raw whale and drunk warm kag water and rowed fifty mile,' stated Turk grimly. He swallowed scalding coffee, flung the tin pannikin at Pluto.

'Come with me, all of you,' he said. 'Git th' irons, Chips. All you got!' And he led the way down the ladder to the crew's quarters.

'Hogg and six men did better than the rest,' Dick put in. 'I promised them I'd speak to Mister Barrett for them, sir.'

'Shet up, and do as you're told!' Turk retorted.

CHAPTER XX

A FLOCK OF BIRDS

The Cuttyhunk sailed briskly eastward. The islet was a vanishing speck astern. In the blubber-room, chained to stanchions with small chains running through their handcuffs, Yerner and Kopp and seven men cursed Turk's name, ancestors, and luck. By turns the others cursed Yerner.

On deck, Stoll sat on the tryworks, cursing Turk especially, but everything in general, though his shoulder was freshly bandaged and he seemed to have been kindly cared for. He peeled potatoes. Old Pluto came from the galley from time to time, inspected the job, and remarked with tremendous dignity befitting a nigger cook with a disrated third mate for boy: 'Peel dem spuds thin, Mista Stoll. Ah cain't have 'em wasted. Cap'n Turk tole me Ah wuz to see yo done 'em ——'

At that point Stoll usually stopped the comment with a fierce look. It was early yet for Pluto thoroughly to assume the proper air of superiority that fitted the situation. Stoll was still the late third mate.

Turk was sleeping, as were his boat's crew. There was something not quite right about Turk. He looked ill. While he had been bandaging Stoll's shoulder, after rather brutally but wisely reopening the wound and douching it with creso, a spasm or

two had shaken him, and it was not mere weariness or boat soreness. His rugged face was haggard and pale, and his lips had a blue tinge. But he had gruffly answered June, who brought him a noggin of rum and asked if he were hurt, that he was all right except for want of sleep; that he would be on deck again in an hour or so and make the old ship travel to get rid of her.

'Then, maybe, my ship'll be a ship and not a madhouse, my lass!'

That was not like Captain Turk. He had rarely hurt anybody willingly, unless the hurt were tremendously justified. At any other time, he would hardly have made even Stoll work, with that shoulder, though it was an easy job he gave him. Ben Barrett shook his head over the skipper's case when left in charge of the ship. For one thing, Turk had dismissed the subject of officers when Ben raised it, saying there would be time enough when he came on deck again. That meant young Dick Edwards ate his midday meal in the cabin! The Old Man must be ill!

It was afternoon before the boat's crew appeared. Theirs had been a tough experience. Others in the whaling business had suffered more, perhaps, but these were elderly men, all of them; they had gone through a terrific encounter with a hundred-ton bull whale before they realized that the ship was leaving them. At first Turk refused to believe it. But she disappeared down to leeward, due west, and there was no longer doubt. They had suffered under the

blazing sun. The water in the keg was stale. The hardtack in the tank, old and flinty. Turk had made them cut flesh from the small of the dead whale, before starting them at the oars. There was no sail in the boat. So rarely did the skipper lower away the starboard boat, and so poor had been the whaling this cruise, that Turk's boat was not as well equipped as it ought to be. And they had rowed west, Turk steering, all that day and all night, due west, because Turk stubbornly refused to believe that all his crew were lice, and insisted his ship would come seeking them. He had suffered, had the Old Man. In a lifetime of whaling, he had never before known a whaleman to leave a boat. It was a shock that might well cause him a spasm. That was the gist of the cooper's yarn. The steward told the same in different terms to Ben and Jed at table.

Turk came on deck after dinner, and first of all went to the chart table and checked off the position of the islet. Then he retraced the ship's course for all the time she had sailed west until he found the only group of tiny islands that could possibly include June's home. He brought her in, then.

'Maybe your memory's a mite better now, lass. Tell me the name o' your island.'

June was very eager to do just that. She had no more ardent wish in life just then than to get back to the peace and tranquil security of her uncle's lonely trading post. Her rosy finger ran along Turk's penciled line to a little semicircular group of atolls.

'That's it,' she cried softly.

'Ain't nawthin' like th' name you said before,' he said sharply.

'I told you the native name. I was silly. I'm very sorry.'

She was so sincere that Turk's grim face broke into a faint smile. He had heard all about her little romance, and she had got very little out of it but uproar and stark ugliness.

'Well, June, it can't be helped now,' he told her, putting his hand on her sleek head in one strangely tender gesture. 'We can only take you back home and start out fishin' all over. You jest keep stiddy as you go and everything'll be fine. I'm sure glad you remembered thet island, though.'

As Turk was taking an afternoon sight of the sun, he saw through the sextant telescope a wheeling flock of birds low down on the sea. They rose and swooped and whirled above what seemed to be a moving hill of white. Now and then the mountain suffered an upheaval, revealing a dark subsoil, as it were. He finished the observation, noted down the time and the angle, then took his big telescope and mounted to the mizzen-top. In five minutes he was down, grim and unsmiling.

'Muster all hands!' he said. 'H'ist them pretty piruts out o' th' hold, too. Keep 'em on th' chain.'

Altering the course slightly, he brought the ship nearer to the horde of birds, whose screams now filled the air. The men, unfettered, stood at the rail, watching. The chained prisoners were made to

march along the deck until they could all stand in line.

'Take a good look, you precious rascals!' Turk roared. 'Thet's what you left me an' a boat's crew o' your shipmates to! Look hard, and don't ever you forgit it.'

By now the Cuttyhunk had drawn near enough for the beating of wings to be heard above the creaking of her own gear. The gory red of the whale, with its stripped white blubber and the black skin and the blue sea made a gruesome picture. With the sea boiling with the thrashing of sharks and the heaving of the huge mass of carrion under their ferocious attacks, it was such a ghastly object lesson that few of the men missed Turk's meaning. Only Yerner and Stoll laughed. Yerner laughed because he was naturally callous and cruel. Stoll laughed because he was sore, and in that picture he could imagine he saw Turk in the place of the whale. Turk had humiliated him. Stoll would not have been so resentful had he been clapped in irons with Yerner. That was a man's punishment, anyhow.

'Thet'll do!' Turk snapped, the ship passing on. 'Strike thet chaingang below again.'

He set the ship back on her course, and at last satisfied Ben Barrett's curiosity as to his exact purpose. Ben was impatient about Dick's status.

'I'm goin' to sail straight back ontil I land this young lady,' he announced. 'There's plenty o' hands free to sail th' ship. Shan't need no third mate, sence we ain't lowerin' for whale ontil th'

gal's business is settled. But when we begin fishin' again, there'll be work for a third mate, so you, Jed, carry on second mate, and you, Dick Edwards, act third mate so's you'll git used to bein' aft ——'

'He's used to thet!' growled Ben viciously. 'He wuz skipper not so long back. 'Twuz him as run th' ship onto thet reef. Thought mighty well of himself, he did, an' them rats made him their navigator.'

'Oh, that's wicked!' cried June, leaping down from the skids to face Ben Barrett with flashing eyes and flushed face. 'You know Dick couldn't help himself! He agreed to that man Yerner's wishes only to keep them from pestering me. He made that condition, and you know it. You do, too, Jed. Why don't you speak? I thought you were Dick's friend.'

'Don't worry, little lass,' said Turk, with a quiet, understanding smile. 'Jed understands, an' so does Mister Barrett. So do I. Don't you butt in again, Ben, onless you're invited. Es I was a-sayin', there's men enough to eat th' ship ontil we start whalin' again. Soon's we've landed June, an' I've given her uncle a leetle advice about takin' care o' sech a restless pigeon, we'll hit out fer th' Line grounds an' foller th' sperm ontil we're bung-full. I'll let out th' jailbirds then, and work th' everlastin' guts out of 'em if th' whales only show us a spout often enough.'

'Ain't you goin' to jail 'em?' blurted Ben.

'Maybe it won't be necessary, Ben. 'Cordin' how you fellers works 'em in your boats. We'll see. Now don't you set no masthead lookouts ontil we get thet

island off our minds. We'll start in whalin' with a clean log slate.'

It was as if Lady Luck really existed and was having a rich feast of sport with Captain Turk. A sperm whale spouted alongside within an hour, so close that the clap of the spiracle was clearly audible. The ship sailed serenely on. Men had been told not to report a spout. That night, in the vivid light of the full moon, the sea appeared to be writhing with whales. Men grumbled. Here was a whaleship, over a year out, with one whale cut in, and the sea alive with sperm, sailing through a greasy fortune.

But Turk knew his mind. There was to be no more mixing of affairs. Once during another night, when two great cows swam along parallel with the ship's course for half an hour, as if challenging her to chase them, Dick, who was on watch, went and wakened Turk. Youthful hunting instinct would not let him dumbly see those great creatures ignored.

'Carry out orders, if you want to stay aft!' growled Turk from his bed.

'They must be eighty barrels apiece! I could spit on them from the larboard boat!' Dick persisted excitedly.

'Thet's you, my son. Go and spit on 'em,' Turk grunted, and rolled over to sleep.

Only the freshening breezes kept the men busy enough to forget the scot-free whales. A sea slopped over the rail from time to time, and the mate must see to the lashings of movable gear about the decks. Turk had crossed royal yards and set the royals in

his eagerness to reach June's island home; rising wind caused them to be taken in. By afternoon the mercury had started to fall in a decided and alarming fashion. As yet there was no cloud in the blue sky. The sea rolled crisply and heavily, but it was long and unbroken except at intervals, and so far of no great menace. But Turk watched his glass, and he knew his Pacific. Soon, when the barometer had fallen three tenths of an inch in an hour, he detected a fine, almost invisible haze over the sunlit blue of the sky. Still there was no cloud. But weather was coming, that was certain.

'Swing in th' boats and make 'em fast, Ben,' he ordered. He hung on to his canvas awhile, for the old whaleship was stout and short-rigged, like most whaleships cruising. With royals stowed, she might run another ten miles before he need strip her to topsails. And the glass might be a liar, anyhow, though he had rarely found the barometer lie when a fall was accompanied with that insidious haze that was creeping faster. He looked at the glass again, after half an hour, and hopped out on deck in a hurry. The mercury had fallen two tenths in an appallingly brief period.

'Get it off her! Strip her down to tawps'ls and foretopmast-stays'l!' he bawled. Men followed around to the gear, muttering, glancing at the apparently clear sky, in no great haste. A man started the outer jib sheet before letting the halliards run, just as the first puff of wind came out of a smoky weather quarter, and in a moment the jib gave one

crack and fled down wind in streamers. The flopping sheet hurled the sailor clear over the windlass bitts.

'Jump, you sojers!' roared Ben Barrett, easing away the fore tack. 'Run up thet clewgarnet! You, Edwards, up aloft, an' show them swabs how to tie up a t'gallants'l! Gawdlemity! Must I go up thar myself?'

Men needed no such urging now. The sky was suddenly dull, then gray, and soon slaty. The sea had a whip and a sting to it, breaking venomously. Dick worked like two men, and drove others by example, so that the old ship was soon under fairly easy canvas; but in half an hour more she was shipping heavy water, light as she was, and scaring to death the men chained in the square of the open hatch. The glass still fell. The sky was black. Black clouds rushed across black skies at eighty miles an hour. At ninety. At a hundred. And on the breath of one crashing blast the foretopmast-staysail exploded in ribbons, the mizzen-topsail sped down wind like a frightened bat, and the ship staggered like a stunned creature.

'Get th' maintawps'l reefed and set it again. Then take in th' foretawps'l,' said Turk anxiously. 'Hev to heave her to.'

CHAPTER XXI

HURRICANE

It takes an unusual blast of wind to hurl heavy seas aboard a light whaler. The Cuttyhunk, sitting high in the water with her empty casks, rode the seas like a duck generally; once get her hove to, and Turk knew she would take care of herself in almost any sort of wind that might blow. But there was more than a gale in this elemental upheaval. As she swept to head the seas, carefully nursed by Turk himself at the helm, the wind hove her down; her lee bulwarks vanished; her lee yardarms dipped; a sea rolled in from leeward and knocked down the brick tryworks. Bricks flew everywhere.

'Won't she ever come to?' muttered Turk, for the first time in his life uneasy regarding what the sea could do. The bricks rolled about his legs, floated aft. Water poured down the hatchway, and a howl of terror pealed up from the chained men below. Ben Barrett drove his men from the last furled sail to help Chips and the cooper clap on the hatches and batten them. That was the first time since quitting the home harbor the hatches had been needed through weather. And the ship came to the wind, bowing the seas, just about the time the last wedge was thumped home at the hatch.

'Somethin' more'n a gale o' wind in this!' roared Turk as the mates gathered about him at the wheel. 'Look — see how th' glass stands, Ben.'

Dick was down at the glass almost before Ben got the order. It was down to twenty-nine inches; the last drop had been two tenths. He turned to go on deck, and June ran out from her room, staggering to the giddy motion, catching at the table edges, laughing with happiness at the rough tumbling the sea was giving her.

'I tried to go up, and Captain Turk swore at me and sent me below!' she cried. 'I want to watch the sea. I always do in storms. This is a good one, isn't it?'

'It's a bad one! Better obey orders,' said Dick.

He mounted the narrow stairway and reported the barometer reading. June slipped up behind him, and darted like a wraith of storm-cloud to the stern, and up onto the skids unnoticed.

'Twenty-nine and fallin'?' Turk repeated. He peered around at the smoking seas. The sky had taken on a frightful aspect. The sooty scud flew at terrific speed low down across the face of a swollen, black sky. Here and there, at intervals, a patch of vivid blue showed for an instant and was blotted out as if by a furious hand. The seas rolled with steep, breaking crests that had a vicious hiss to them. The most seasoned old whaleman aboard the Cuttyhunk was glad to use two hands in keeping his feet on the reeling decks.

Turk suddenly let go the wheel with one hand and clapped that hand to his back. His face was dead white.

'Watch her awhile, Ben. I got a sort o' misery in

my kidneys. She don't need more'n watchin', and I'll be right back.'

Turk stumbled below. When Dick was sent down to get a bit of supper before relieving Ben at the helm, Turk's cabin door was swinging, and the crash of it was not bothering the skipper. The steward was at the galley. Dick called June, but waited for no answer then; he was wondering what could have happened to the skipper. He stepped to the banging door and hooked it back.

'Can I do anything, sir? Get anything?' he asked.

He had to shout to make himself heard above the clatter of gear. Everything movable was moving. A bottle and glass had fallen to the floor, and rolled back and forth on the carpet unbroken. Dick picked them up, putting them on a towel in the washbasin for safety. He glanced at the bottle, it was labeled like any other medicine bottle. The contents were half gone. It was some patent specific for Bright's disease. That meant little to Dick, to whom all medicines were alike — soothing syrups for old men. But he did want to be of service to Turk. That look of pain, of wan, haggard weariness, had frightened him. Turk was so completely a strong man in everything.

'Anything I can get, sir?' he repeated, and touched the skipper's breast. For a moment he was afraid Turk was dead. But a heavy lurch of the ship rolled Turk over in the bed, and he sat up with a start, his eyes blinking.

'Are you all right, sir?' Dick patiently persisted.

'Yes, my lad, yes, I'm coming right up,' Turk replied, feeling around under him, and looking around the cabin. He saw the bottle and glass in the washbasin, and lurched to the floor, taking the medicine and shoving it away in a drawer. He seemed to look at Dick suspiciously, as if fearing he had seen that bottle label and unwilling that he should. But Dick only looked relieved to see him on his legs again.

'It's all right on deck, sir. I was just getting a bite and saw you lying there with the door swinging. You didn't answer when I spoke twice, so I was afraid you might be ill.'

'Dick, you keep to yourself that you see me swillin' physic. I thought I hooked thet consarned door.' Turk pulled himself along by the handrail on the bulkhead and went back on deck; but there was no question in Dick's mind that he was a sick man and was ashamed of the weakness.

The mercury continued to fall until it reached 28.60 inches, and Turk had never known it to go lower than that. The men refused to go below. They and the mates and all but the men in the hold and Pluto huddled aft beneath the skids. Pluto locked himself in the galley as soon as the steward left him, and every now and then, until it grew pitch dark, his black visage appeared at the grated window, his thick wide lips busy in prayer, his eyes turned up until the whites alone were visible.

The wind was like a wall. To face it meant strangulation. Just as the last smoky twilight

flickered and turned to blackness, a terrific thundering forward told of a jib burst loose from the gasket. The ship trembled under the wrenching of the spar.

'Foller me who dares!' growled Ben Barrett. 'Ef we don't make thet sail fast, it'll yank th' fo'mast out of her.'

The dour old mate started out from the shelter of the skids and Dick was at his heels. The moment Ben got the wind fairly upon him, he was picked up and hurled to leeward like an empty sack. He disappeared in the smother of water in the lee waterways.

'My Lord! He'll be through the wash port!' groaned Turk, dragging himself up from the skylight by gripping the arms of Jed Roach at the wheel. Men grumbled. They had seen how the wind picked Ben up. It would pick them up just like that. But Dick was already on his way. He let himself slide just before he left the shelter and caught a buntline coil from the mizzen rigging. Then he let go everything else, and went swinging down into the weltering scuppers.

'Oh, Dick!' screamed June, from the skids. 'Dick! You'll be drowned!' The girl was crouched between the two housed boats. Dick heard her scream, but it was whipped down wind before any of the men underneath heard it. Dick could only go on with what he had started, though he felt every second as if his arms would be pulled out, and his chest driven in. There was Ben, his legs caught in the swinging port, fighting like a hero to pull his legs

free before the wind and crashing seas beat him to death.

'Catch my legs!' howled Dick, and kicked out at Ben. One boot struck Ben in the mouth, cruelly. But Ben caught the other. And Dick started to haul back. The boot came off. Ben fell back, and now rolled freely in the water, clear of the wash port.

'Hold on now!' Dick flung out his legs again. This time Ben wrapped both arms around both of Dick's knees, and Dick began once more to haul their double weight up to windward.

'Oh, won't somebody help him?' shrieked June, above.

A man put out a hand, but would not let go the other, so could not reach the buntline. Then small hands reached out from the skids, missed the rope, and June went hurtling from the skids into the churning foam. Hogg sheepishly started out from his shelter then, shamed by a girl. He had been disrated, was no more than any other fo'mast hand, but he had been aft once, and some of the tradition stuck. He let himself go, trusting to sea-cunning hands to grab that rope before the wind caught him up. And he made it. He got to the buntline as Dick hauled himself and Ben into safety, and used it then to let himself down to the leeward water and grab June, half drowned and thoroughly scared. Dick and Ben, still hanging on to the rope, hauled the second pair to dry security; and by now the loose jib was twenty miles down wind, the shaking spars

humming again as stout spars should in a hurricane.

'Get you some dry clothes,' Turk told Ben and Dick. 'Hev a shot o' rum, too. Give thet man Hogg a snort.' That was all the notice Turk took of the men. He did not look at June, but spoke to Ben: 'Put th' gal below and shut her in her berth. I'll hev a talk to her about disobey in' orders soon's this wind drops.'

The wind did not drop that night. The glass stopped falling at 28.60, but did not rise for a long time. And toward morning, without any noticeable increase in the wind, the sea suddenly took on a ferocity that was beyond anything in the experience of any man aboard. It rolled in from all points. The ship was pressed down until her decks were full and the clew of her reefed maintopsail was in the water. She was flung upright and down on the other side before Turk could even think of axes and cutting away masts. A terrific thunder filled the air; the ship shook as she had never shaken through any mere upheaval of water. Seas tumbled aboard and were rolled back over the rails. A ghostly light touched the yardarms, the mastheads, and the deck structures. The wind abruptly ceased. The thunderous sound persisted, louder. Then the wind came again, harder than ever, but holding to one direction steadily.

'There was more'n wind in that,' shouted Turk, gathering himself together and studying the compass. 'That was one o' them tidal waves, or submarine eruptions.'

'We must ha' been atop of it, then!' growled Ben Barrett.

'If we'd been on top of it, we'd still be going up!' retorted Dick, who had read of such things.

A ragged sort of dawn lightened the sooty skies, and revealed the ocean a waste of chaotic seas. Bits of scud, like dirty wool, flew down wind. The ship, for all her sturdiness and readiness for the blow, looked as if she had been swept by a vast broom. The iron pan that the tryworks had been built in on the deck was wrapped around the pump like a shawl. One of the anchors, well stowed in its bed on the forecastle, had been torn up and flung aft to the foremast, into the rich, tough pine of which one fluke was sunk ten inches. Old whalemen looked at each other's faces in that cheerless dawn as if to see what the other thought about the night before, betraying what might be a solitary thrill.

'Glass gone up 'most an inch,' mused Turk, gazing dubiously to windward. 'Commonly thet means a harder blow comin'. Maybe 'twon't run reg'lar after sech a buster. Wait a mite longer, anyhow. Ben, let th' men get some grub into 'em. Make thet old nigger stop prayin' long enough to git a fire started. Never knowed prayin' git things done yet.'

The men had scarcely swallowed their hot coffee and cold salt beef before the wind struck down again, apparently harder than ever. It came straight out of the west, and Turk seized the chance before it settled down in earnest to set the reefed foresail.

Then, with two men at the kicking wheel, he sailed his ship before the gale, right on the course he wanted to make.

'Ef it lasts, my lass, you'll be home to-morrer,' he told June grimly.

CHAPTER XXII

JUNE'S ISLAND HOME

It rained. In squalls through the sky, and into the early night torrents of warm rain slashed across the decks. It streamed from yards and stays, and out of wind-bursting foresail, like silvery sheets. It drummed on the decks and hatches so that the ship sailed on in an incessant uproar. But the sky grew lighter; the sun had not been seen at setting, but one vivid ray of intense light had shot up from the horizon as it sank; and an hour later, a star winked wetly through a torn storm-cloud.

Turk roared and shouted as night drew on; men thought he was his old self again, and clambered aloft into the still howling blackness to loose sails and overhaul gear. By midnight the rain had ceased, the skies were almost clear, and the ship buzzed along on her eastward course under topgallantsails.

It was Hogg who remembered the men chained in the hold. He took courage and reminded Turk about them.

'Friends o' yours?' growled Turk. There was something about Turk that vaguely suggested a man's desperate effort to hide a weakness. He jerked that sarcastic query at Hogg in a tone not at all justified by the matter, and Hogg, disgraced though he was, resented it.

'If they was friends o' mine, I'd be down there

with 'em,' he replied. 'You'll be lucky if you don't find 'em all dead; that's all.'

That was a possibility that had escaped Turk. The hold of an old whaler is no bed of roses at best, with hatches off and a sweet breeze over all; with hatches battened down, and the ship churning bilge like a cask in a cataract, the blubber-room could be no less than a reeking hell. Jed Roach and the carpenter opened the hatch and took lanterns below. The oil lights burned low and blue as soon as they entered. The chained men lay like corpses. Chips hastily unlocked the chain from the stanchions, and the men were hoisted on deck and laid in the waterways where fresh water could splash them and the cool air from the draft of the courses fan them. They had not all recovered before another day was breaking.

That was a day of happenings. As bright and sparkling as the recent days had been black and ominous, sea and sky and breeze held kindly promise. By noon, Turk had made up his reckoning and decided that June's island home must be within the range of a man's vision from the masthead. Three lookouts were set. And though they saw nothing like land at first, they soon reported patches of floating island débris from the storm; palm fronds, pandanus fans, scraps of hibiscus.

Soon the grass roof of a hut floated past, with a wet and frantic hen on it. The wretched bird tried to flutter onto the ship's rail, fell short, and made a lunch for a shark. A broken canoe came along. The

sea lost its blueness and had a muddy tinge. Still no land from aloft. Two drowned natives in the fork of a twisted scrub cedar made a grim splotch of brown and green on the muddy sea. The crew began to quit the rails.

'Must ha' had quite a breeze hereabouts, too,' Turk muttered, gazing astern after the misshapen tree with its grim crew. 'Tell June to come up here, Dick. I got a queer feelin' about all this wreckage. Ought to be right atop o' that island now. Maybe she'll recognize one o' these floaters. 'Pears to be considerable of 'em.'

Swarming aloft, Turk scanned the ocean through his glasses. On deck, June stared abroad at the desolate waste of turbid sea all dotted with island débris. Every minute, more signs were visible that a community near by had suffered terribly. There were signs, too, of an ocean upheaval beyond all power of mere storms.

'Oh, look!' cried June suddenly.

Dick looked where she pointed. The sea was boiling with fish, writhing with sharks, at a point a hundred fathoms off the weather bow. The ship passed along the fringe of the disturbance, and it was Dick who shouted now. Almost touching the ship's side, like some hideous Thing from the Pit, a giant squid curled and stretched tentacles twenty feet long, as thick as the mainmast, with suckers along their under side as long as teacups. The girl clutched Dick's arm, shuddering. The saucer eyes of the evil thing seemed to be staring up at her.

'Git th' dipsey lead over, Mister Barrett. Luff her up, steersman!' cried Turk, and slid down swiftly. 'Looks mighty like shoal water to me,' he said.

The lead sank, and found bottom at forty fathoms. At the next cast it was fifty-five. Then, five minutes later, thirty.

'Run her off to th' s'uth'ard,' Turk ordered, and took his telescope on to the skids. The chained men were lining the rail, most of them scared, for most of them were poor sailors. Turk noticed them, and ordered them below to the blubber-room again. The masthead lookouts hailed from time to time.

'Sperm whales spoutin' thick to wind'ard!'

'Damn the sperm whales! D'ye see any land?' Turk returned.

'Seems like some'at floatin' to looard!' from the foremast head, more hopefully.

'Blast your eyes! Ain't th' hull ocean a mess o' some'at floatin'?' whipped back the answer.

For several minutes the skipper gazed at something ahead. Abruptly he shut the tubes and leaped down beside the wheel.

'Stiddy! Ben, git for'ard. Go with him, Dick. Thar's a house or somethin', upside down, and somebuddy's in it,' he said.

Soon the ship sailed through a mass of broken matting that was once part of a village. Here and there brown bodies were caught in the pandanus. One, face upward, held out a stiff dead arm that reached for the rudder as the dead man swirled in

the wake. Then June uttered a little cry and went to Turk's side.

'Oh, that was Kadu, uncle's house boy!' she gasped, and suddenly seemed to guess what Turk had practically concluded already. She clung to him now, silent and awed.

'Luff half a p'int! Here it is almost aboard,' shouted Ben from the bowsprit. Turk stepped to the rail to peer ahead, the ship slowly turned toward the wind a little, and Ben and Dick disappeared from sight as they climbed down by the back-ropes to fasten a rope to what they had come upon.

Soon it floated alongside, and the ship lay with her sails shaking. Turk saw there was a white man caught in what had been the roof beams of a bungalow, and curtly ordered the mainyards backed. He called to June, knowing what she would say. It was really not much of a hunch for a sailorman to have. She glanced over the side and clasped her hands agitatedly.

'It's uncle,' she whispered. 'Is he dead?'

'Soon see, lassie,' Turk muttered, and men jumped down to disentangle the trader and lift him aboard. Onslow still lived. He lived long enough to open his eyes and grin painfully at June.

'Glad you're safe, June,' he murmured. 'Worried me a lot. Th' blessed island sank in an earthquake. Don't know — what — you'll — do ——'

June's uncle died. She stood looking down at his thin, lined face. Impulsively she kissed him. Then

she walked away. He had been all she possessed in the way of relatives. She was as much alone as he, though he was dead.

'Sew him up, Chips. We'll give him a decent launchin',' said Turk. Then he led June below while the sewing-up was done, comforting her with rough words that only cloaked the choky note that would come into his throat. Perhaps his own ill-health brought him closer to trouble in another.

'You jest make yourself free o' the ship, my lass, until we can settle you somewhar. Ef we don't find nobody able to care for you, why, I guess th' missus ——'

She was in his arms, sobbing, and he could not finish. It was something new for Turk. He stumped up on deck again as fast as he could, after digging out from the bottom of his sea-chest a mouldy and dog-eared Bible. He had buried many a whaleman without bothering that Bible.

And with the book under his arm, he stamped around the deck cursing idling seamen; sending them here and there about jobs that either did not exist or were unnecessary. He routed out the blacksmith.

'Git you busy, Smith!' he snarled.

'I ben gittin' irons to sink thet stiff,' grumbled Smith.

'Very well. Now you're aimin' to stand an' rust until he's launched, hey? Git you to work on thet tryworks pan. D'you think we ain't goin' whalin' any more jest because we heaves to for a burial? And you, cooper, what might you be busy about?'

'I wuz cal'latin' to rig a gratin' soon's Chips is ready.'

'You git down to th' storeroom an' heave out brick enough to build new tryworks. I'll hail you when you're wanted to help launch Mister Onslow.'

'Th' Old Man's gone gallied!' grumbled the cooper to the blacksmith. But they went about the jobs given them.

In half an hour Turk mustered all hands, even those from the hold, and lined them up at the gangway where Onslow lay in his canvas shroud beneath the folds of a flag on a grating. The grating lay with the foot in the open gangway, the head resting on a cask; the flag was tied at two corners at the head.

'Now commit this body to th' deep —' intoned Turk awkwardly. 'To be tarned into corruption ——' He gabbled much of the rest because he could not see to read it; but he came in strongly with 'Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen!' Then, 'Heave, Ben!' and the body slid into the tawny sea, shooting down with its weights to cheat the swarming sharks.

'Swing th' mainyards!' he bawled. 'Course s'uth-by-east. Masthead, thar! Whar's them sperm whales you wuz yammerin' about awhile back? Keep your eyes skinned, my lads. This ain't a pleasure cruise no longer!'

CHAPTER XXIII

MISTER EDWARDS

TURK was right. That was no pleasure cruise from the day the trader was buried. Before the bubbles that followed his launching had burst, the masthead lookouts were hailing for sperm. Spouts all around showed feathery against the blue of the sky.

'Strike off them irons, and get the mutineers aft 'til I talk to 'em,' said Turk before a boat was lowered. When Yerner and his somewhat subdued gang shuffled in a crowd around the skipper, Turk gave them a short, terse speech that had no double meanings.

'So you'll pull boat an' haul blubber an' blow off your steam in th' work you signed to do ontil th' ship's bung-full of ile. After that, I'll hev somethin' more to say to you.'

There was no promise of forgiveness; nothing but a schedule of back-breaking work. Afterwards, uncertainty.

'Why would we work our guts out now and get shoved ashore into the rattle after we've filled your darned old ship?' demanded Yerner boldly. 'How about it, lads?'

Turk's eye was upon him, and Yerner turned to his mates for support. A sullen growl went up from them.

'I'll tell you,' said Turk grimly. 'You'll do it be-

cause you've had your playtime an' it's over. Do your work, an' you'll get your rations same as th' others an' sleep in your bunks when sleep you may. Try any more hooraw business an' you'll eat hard-tack an' drink water, an' sleep in irons in th' blubber-room; besides which, you'll pull boat an' haul blubber an' heave at th' windlass jest th' same. That'll do, my lads. Now Mister Barrett, an' Mister Roach, an' *Mister* Edwards, you can all lower away an' see what's th' meanin' of all them sperm spouts I see down to looard.'

Three boats away, and eighteen men. Dick found himself abruptly placed in command of the forward boat, almost before he realized it. He was still buzzing inwardly with the sound of that *Mister* Edwards. Kopp was at the stroke oar, too, his ugly, evil face all awork with hatred. But Dick scarcely saw who was in his boat in the first thrill of command. The big thing, the thing that sent him away from the ship standing up at his steering oar shouting to his men in a strange rusty voice that trembled, was that he got his boat in the water before the mate was afloat. And Hogg was in the harpooneer's place. Hogg rowed the bow oar. Hogg would fasten to the whale if Dick brought the boat within striking distance; and Hogg, for all his dumb foolishness, was one of the smartest whalemen in the ship. Dick spared himself one swift backward glance, caught sight of Turk on his way aloft to keep lookout, and saw June perched on the skids, all alight with interest that was even stronger than her

very recent bereavement. She waved a hand at him.

'Pull, you!' he growled at Kopp, kicking at the oar. 'Hogg! Set us a stroke. D'you want those old mossbacks to beat you to your whale?'

Ben Barrett's boat was foaming ahead, dragged by five of the soundest pairs of arms in all the crew, driven by the mate's savage tongue. Ben, too, had heard that *Mister* Edwards. He meant to have something to say about that later.

The sea was alive with whales. As if the recent storm had emptied the heavens of all menace, the sky was clear and blue to the horizon. The sea lay level as a floor. There was just enough breeze to bring the old ship along after the boats so that there need be no heart-breaking pull to windward, towing a whale back to her when dead. And right ahead of the boats rolled two great cachalots, feeding on the surface upon some plentiful food so much to their liking that they had no mind for the speeding boats. Other whales played farther on; and one boat of the three would have to go on for its catch.

'Hit it up, Hogg!' yelled Dick. 'Stroke her along! Jed's cutting in on us!'

The boat swept through a tangle of shorn squid tentacles. One of the two whales slowly turned, cruising leisurely among the luscious morsels. Never had squid been seen so thick or so near the surface. Barrett steered his boat in closer to Dick's, aiming at the turning whale.

'Ten strokes! Then we've got him!' cried Dick. His boat swung sharply, his boat oars almost

touched those of the mate's boat. The whale suddenly saw the boats. In a moment he would sheer off or sound.

'Stand up!'

Dick gave his first striking order in a voice that sounded strange to himself. He tried hard to keep cool. Hogg laid in his oar, and stood up, catching up his first iron with the one movement. There was no excitement about Hogg. The man was a machine; a death-dealing mechanism for hurling a harpoon. The harpooneer in the mate's boat was up, too. His iron was ready. Dick swerved his boat, stopping his rowers. He was yet beyond perfect range, but Ben Barrett was about to fasten to the whale.

'Sock it in!' yelled Dick. 'Let him have it!'

Hogg's iron flew. Right to the hitches it sank in the black bulk. The mate's iron flew almost at the same moment Hogg snatched up his second iron, hurled it, and fastened on. The whale was stung to madness. He twisted, plunged, and started off like a destroyer, brushing the bows of Barrett's boat and almost capsizing it. Then Dick's boat crashed the other, completing the upset, and the mate's harpooneer cut his line to save lives.

'Wet that line! Wet it!' screamed Dick, surging it around the loggerhead. The seas curled at the bows. He was too full of the chase to change places with Hogg. The whale flung sprays behind him in clouds as he stormed along to the tremendous thrusts of his vast flukes. Dick held on to the turns of the line when he should have given slack. But he

remembered that other time when he had got in a killing thrust of a lance to the disaster of the boat's crew; he was mad enough now to want to repeat that and show that it might be done without mishap. He meant to stay close to his game. The boat thrummed to the stress of her driving.

'Come aft, Hogg!' he sang out, in what seemed to be a steady moment. He went forward now, clambering over the men and the twanging line between them. There were red streaks in the foam that flew past. Three irons had sunk into the whale; Hogg's first harpoon had been so cleverly placed that it had almost done the work of a lance. It was embedded deep very close to a vital spot. And the whale was slowing up.

'Haul in!' Dick ordered. 'Haul!' He meant to lance that whale before it could dive. The whale suddenly stopped dead, so abruptly that the boat slid up to it.

'Watch out!' roared Hogg, who had caught a glimpse of the monster's little eye. 'Out oars! Starn all!'

Hogg was just a whaleman now. He forgot that he was but one of Dick's crew, and that Dick, shipped as a greenhorn, was now after his first whale as a killer. All he knew was that he had seen a pain-maddened sperm whale's eye fixed upon the boat, and that one sweep of that twenty-foot tail would cover the sea with bits of boat and men.

'Hold on oars!' yelled Dick, who was not concerned with eyes, but had his own eye set upon a

small patch of black shining whale skin just over the end of his gleaming lance. As he yelled, he plunged the lance home with a grunt. It sank to the socket and he felt the titanic shudder that ran along the pole from the creature's great heart. The next instant the sea arose in a blinding crash of thunderous sound and Dick flew through the air like a flung towel.

When he came to the surface after a deep plunge and shook the water from his eyes, he was floating in a huddle of oars and boat gear, with here and there a half-strangled man, and all around him a tangle of whaleline. Hogg puffed painfully near him, coughing up sea-water, red-faced and astonished. There lay the boat, right side up and apparently unhurt. The other men clung to the gunwales. And there, too, lay the whale, dead as a herring, red trickling from its spiracle down its great blunt head, bristling like a sunfish with three harpoons and Dick's triumphant lance.

'Some fish!' laughed Dick, striking out for the boat.

'Some luck!' grumbled Hogg, reaching for the gunwale. 'You must ha' stepped in somethin' before you shipped. Lucky we ain't all deader'n that whale.'

'A dead whale and never a stove boat, my son,' retorted Dick cockily, and clambered aboard the whaleboat.

The boat was bailed out and all her gear recovered; she lay by the whale waiting for the ship, which was

within a mile. And when Dick hauled his catch up to the fluke chains, making it fast to the Cuttyhunk's starboard side, there was Captain Turk, trying to hide a grin, looking through his telescope at the other boats.

The mate had righted his boat and was flying like a speed-boat over the sea in tow of a lively smallish whale. He was already only a speck. Jed Roach's boat lay alongside a dead whale a mile to leeward. And still the ocean showed spouts as thick as steam jets in the Valley of a Thousand Smokes.

'A lot of squid about, sir,' said Dick, assuming an air of mature wisdom that made Turk squint at him. ''Shouldn't wonder if that eruption had something to do with it. Think it stirred 'em up from the bottom of the sea, sir?'

'Shouldn't wonder, Mister Edwards, shouldn't wonder at all,' replied Turk coolly. But in his heart Turk knew that Dick had shrewdly hit upon the exact answer to that amazing harvest of sperm whales in a sea where, a month before, the Cuttyhunk had sailed weary day after dreary day seeking even a single spout that never showed up.

The ocean-bed, the lurking-place for the hideous giant octopus so toothsome to the cachalot, to which the whale must go, daring terrific pressures to seek out his foe and food, had undergone an upheaval in that cataclysm the ship had borne so bravely. Until the squid readjusted themselves and sought out new depths, that part of the ocean was a seething feeding ground that had already attracted whales in fleets.

Jed Roach was picked up, his whale made fast; then, with a whale lashed to each side of her, the old Cuttyhunk went rolling down to leeward, where, the merest speck against the blue, Ben Barrett lay beside a third whale, a weft on a pole stuck in the whale's spiracle fluttering hopefully. Ben hoped he could be seen. It would be a grievous windward pull to the ship if he were not. But he was seen all right. Two hours after dark, his whale was made fast and towed astern of the ship; his boat was hoisted, and the hands were fed and told to get a rest before starting the real work of whaling — cutting in.

CHAPTER XXIV

GREASY LUCK

WHAT an inferno of work that was! For a day and a night and half another day the Cuttyhunk polluted the broad Pacific with the reek of blubber-fed try-works fires. Greasy black smoke rolled down the level sea, too heavy to rise and vanish. Strings of soot hung from sails and rigging; the ship's side was slippery with oil and red with bloody drippings.

Two hundred barrels of oil they boiled out of the three whales, and every pint of it contained sweat of Master Yerner and his precious rascals. Dick, as became an officer, had a place on the cutting stage with Ben Barrett and Jed Roach. He handled his long cutting spade with the dash and assurance of youth, keeping a shrewd eye upon old Jed's spade for his own guidance, turning a deaf ear to Ben Barrett's surly mutterings about his cocky over-confidence. Stripping the blubber called for skill, but no more than a smart fellow, son-of-a-long-line of whalemen, had inherent in him. By closely watching Ben and Jed, leaving the starting of the cut to Ben, and following every move carefully, Dick did well enough on his own whale; and by the time the last whale was hauled under the cutting stage, he knew all about it.

There were no easy jobs aboard a whaleship cutting in; but some were less deadly than others,

and these were the jobs of the ship's good little boys. The wretched mutineers sweated in the sickening reek of the blubber-room, coiling down the great slippery blanket pieces of blubber, working at fever pitch to escape being buried alive under the steamy, greasy, bloody mass. Other men at the windlass hove the blanket aloft until sliced off by a harpooneer's boarding-knife, then lowered it below, while the other tackles were already dragging up another vast strip of blubber.

Then, when the decks were heaped high and the blubber-room choke-full, and the scupper plugs were in to save the drained oil that was already six inches deep over the planks, there was a short rest for food, and the fires were lighted. It was then that the Cuttyhunk seethed. Men below cut off chunks of blubber, hove them to the men at the slicing tables, and they in turn cut the tough fat into bibles — wads of thin slices held together by a thin back strip, as the grocer slices bacon and leaves it attached to the skin. The man at the trypots forked it into the bubbling coppers, and the merry reek of the staggering black smoke was ameliorated by the milder aroma of clean oil.

One sperm head, the smallest, had been lifted aboard whole, to be emptied of its precious clear oil at leisure. Two greater heads hung against the ship's side, too heavy to be taken aboard. They must be emptied with bucket and pole through a hole cut in the head as they hung to the lashings. Slowly drifting away from the ship, she lying idly

on the sea with sails clewed up while trying out, three ghastly carcasses made a feast for screaming flocks of birds and fighting hordes of sharks.

By night the sky was a sooty pall of red-shot black. Smoke and sizzling flames. The fires, fed by 'fritters,' as the shriveled pieces of fat residue were called, blazed fiercely. The cooper's gang hooped and headed great casks; harpooneers ladled the warm oil into cooling-tanks and thence into the barrels. To free the groaning decks, men under Dick struck full casks down the hold; Ben Barrett had a gang stowing them. Old Pluto fussed from galley to trypots, cooking doughnuts in the boiling oil and whale steaks over his galley fire. The steward cut the choicest fillets from the 'small' of the smallest whale, next to the tail; that was for the cabin. There was flesh for the forecastle, too; a great mass of red meat, like the beef of a buffalo. And while all was toil, and men were ready to drop at their work, Turk sat on skids, restlessly calculating the time required to finish the cutting in so that he might start all over again upon the teeming whales, whose spouts played wherever the eye could see.

'How d'you like whaling now?' he asked June, watching her daintily attempt her steak awhile later at supper.

'It's smelly!' she said, wrinkling her nose. 'I was afraid the meat would taste like the smoke smells, but it doesn't. It's rather nice.' She ate more confidently; then looked up at him with a shade of anxiety in her face.

'Is the ship going home now?'

'Bless your heart, she'll b'ile down many a whale yet, I hope!' he told her. 'Ain't gettin' homesick, are you?'

'No. I have no home now,' she said soberly. 'But you ought to get somewhere to see a doctor. You're not well, you know.'

Turk laughed kindly, patting her hand. It was something new for him to hear expressed anxiety concerning his welfare. She was brave about her own affairs, too.

'Don't you worry about me, lassie. You're a good little lass, but I'm too well to quit a whalin' ground as rich as this. I never see nothin' like it. D'you know, I wouldn't be surprised if you hev brought a treasure to this old ship more'n you dreamed about. A full whaleship is a rich enough treasure, an' we'll be bung-full in a month unless them whales gits so full o' squid they quit feedin'. That ain't likely.'

The whales did not quit. Day after day, week in, week out, the boats were away in chase. Never a day for a full month were the Cuttyhunk's tryworks fires out; and she took and tried out thirty sperm whales without once sheeting home for sails or moving from the spot where these first three whales were cut in. The mutineers were a sick and sorry lot. Too bone-weary to think of mutiny now, but desperate enough to steal a boat and run if ever the ship raised land. She raised no land, not even a feathery, distant palm.

Day after day Turk saw treasure poured into his

hold. Day after day he concealed the pain that wracked him, lying to June with a whimsical smile, as stubborn in success as he had been in failure.

'I'll see a doctor when I get home, lassie,' he told the girl. 'Ain't no doctor like your own family doctor. Old Doc Swain sot my missus's dawg's hind laig once. He'll know what ails me.'

'Well, take your medicine, then,' she insisted; and he would take it, to give her pleasure. He needed it, too. He knew that. But it would never do to let her know that he did. That near fatality of the abandoned boat had done him no good. There were times when he gazed dubiously at the sky, which for a month hung dazzling blue above him except for his own ship's befouling. There was always a small breeze that would carry him to an island port. Always there came spouting cachalots to blow the island from his mind.

Dick developed a smartness that was a joy to Turk and a pride to Jed Roach. It was a sore thorn in the side of Ben Barrett. The lad was outgrowing him. Dick audaciously usurped the mate's place at one cutting in and decapitated the whale himself. It was a piece of skilled whalemanship. Ben Barrett at his best took fifteen minutes over the gigantic anatomical feat. Dick severed the mighty neck and vertebra in just twenty. The head was fast alongside when Ben returned to do the job after going aboard to get a keener cutting spade.

'You're too smart, youngster!' snarled Ben. 'You'll get took aback yet.'

'Who'll take me aback, Ben?' Dick laughed good-humoredly.

'Watch yourself!' grumbled Ben sullenly.

Dick only grinned and started cutting the head to bail out the 'case.' It was no time for quarreling. All hands were too full of work to breed idle blood; and it was always idle blood that made trouble at sea. But Dick could have wished that the mate had got rid of his grouch. Ben had never forgiven the skipper for putting Dick aft; nor had he forgotten that this advance in Dick's condition aboard the Cuttyhunk had not been quite as attributable to Ben Barrett's efficiency in manhandling as he had intended.

So while nothing came of the little encounter right there, it brought back the feeling of friction that had not been so palpable lately. Captain Turk had noticed the incident.

''Bout time you laid off young Edwards,' he told the mate at dinner.

Ben was grim enough, sitting there, elbows on table, grease from forelock to boots, spattered with blood and grimed with smoke. He ate as a man eats who must eat to live, and has little enough time for it. He swallowed a gobbet of whale beef, washed it home with a sucking draft of powerful stewed tea, and grunted as he rose: 'Ef you puts a beggar on hossback ——'

'Don't be a fool, Ben!' snapped Turk. 'Dick Edwards is makin' into a top-line whaleman and you know it. He's likely to go over Roach's head

purty soon, too. Better let up on him. He's too much for you.'

'While you're about it, might as well put him over my head, too, Cap'n Turk! I'll let up on him soon's I see him es good a man es his father c'missioned me to make him.'

'He's that now,' laughed Turk, sensing Ben's grievance. 'Old Peter Edwards never said to bully-damn th' lad after he started in to show willin'. As fer puttin' him over your head, that ain't so silly es you might think. Ef you keeps after him, he'll lick you some day, an' then I'll be bound to put him above you. He's darn near es good a whaleman now.'

Turk added that out of a spirit of raillery. It supplied the prod needed to make Ben Barrett determined to keep after Dick to the bitter end.

As for Dick, he found more minutes of valuable time in a day than he ever believed were contained in a year before. Between heading his boat after whales, handling his spade in cutting in, standing his watch, and looking after his boat gear, he kept hard after the elusive science of complete navigation. Seamanship he had acquired on the voyage with the aptitude of a born sailor. And when navigation palled for a few minutes, as before lying down to snatch a brief sleep, he had a little secret all his own which always stole a little of his scanty rest time. He had learned from the cooper how to make scrimshander, that wonderful whale ivory work beloved of Cape Horn sperm men. With a choice piece of

bone from the jaw of his first whale, he was carving a trinket-box of amazing delicacy. He had discovered a knack for the work, and he put his heartbeats into every little scratch and cut of the carving.

It was for June.

CHAPTER XXV

THE TRINKET-BOX

JUNE ONSLOW had greatly changed from the elfin creature who clambered aboard the old whaleship out of a willfully capsized canoe. She had taken up those duties which had been given to her before, and which she had mischievously cajoled others into doing for her. There was a sober earnestness in the way in which she now ruled over all the interior cabin arrangements. She took charge of the bunks; and perhaps for the first time in a lifetime of whaling, Jed Roach and Ben Barrett knew the comparative luxury of beds and blankets that were aired and shaken up every day. Captain Turk was used to having his bed made; he carried a steward (some whalers did not), so he had a right to expect service. But the steward's duties did not extend to the mates. But even in the skipper's room the girl found much to occupy her taste for daintiness, so long dormant on her island. She insisted on dosing him with medicine; he submitted as much because he liked to see her very dignified air of insistence as because he knew he needed it. She tidied up his table and cleared the floor of boots and untidy things which the steward overlooked and which Turk seemed to be content should be overlooked.

Perhaps the girl had known so little family life

that she scarcely missed her uncle. She never mentioned her loss, unless it was included in a general expression of sorrow for the islanders and their wiped-out island home. Through all the rather grim and nasty business of incessant whaling, she remained as detached from it as if she were in another ship altogether. The environment seemed not to touch her.

Looking to be about seventeen years old, she still possessed that mature poise and decision at times that made her age simple conjecture. She had looked almost boyish in her scanty island garment, yet her slim figure was moulded on soft, rounded lines. She was feminine to the last supple curve. And she was actually innocent, naïve almost; unaware of evil as the greater world knows it; astonished that men could so covet things that did not belong to them as to be willing to leave other men to die on the ocean and to become mutineers and potential murderers. It had been a shock to her, also, to have men regard her as Yerner and Blazes and some of the others had regarded her. Their eyes made her feel naked. No men in all her life before had looked at her like that. Her islanders were men of naturally easy morals, as morals are considered by a self-named civilization; but none of those sunny brown men had ever made her feel naked, even though often she had gone unclothed to swim and they knew it. Life had opened quite considerably for June, since that mad evening of rebellion against loneliness when she dared what aftermath the storm might yet bring and put off in

her frail skiff to that wandering sail beyond the rain squalls.

Dick Edwards had seen the change in her. He put it down, naturally enough, to the shock of her uncle's death. She was not as merry a shipmate as before; but then she had seen unpleasant things happen. She would come around in time. She would brighten up, he knew, when he took that trinket-box to her.

Dick was changing, too, though being himself he would be the last to realize it. Past twenty, rising to full manhood as years go, straight as a pine in body and limb, straight as a line in character for all his follies of hot youth, he believed in himself utterly. He was perhaps not old enough to concede that he had been wrong and his elders right about those rebellious years at home. But he was fully aware of the progress he was making in the business of whaling and sailorizing. He gave Jed Roach full credit, because Jed had given him that old sextant. He was scarcely ready to give Ben Barrett credit for anything, though really it was Ben's everlasting driving that first of all made him learn his work in sheer self-defense. If he remembered Ben in any way at all, it was as the man who had shanghaied him aboard the old blubber-hunter; and no matter what happened in the mean time, he meant to settle that score once for all when the time was ripe. It was queer how he and Ben Barrett, so widely different in everything else, were one-minded in that matter of a score to settle.

But at present, in the constant uproar of battling

sperm whales and converting them into golden fluid, that precious trinket-box occupied his leisure thought to the exclusion of all else. He was apt to be intolerant of elders who were simply elders and not superiors. Just at the moment he was not ready to concede superiority to any of his elders, unless it might be the skipper; and, recalling how he had helped Turk out in the matter of taking a star observation, he was not altogether sure that Turk had anything on him. The feeling was grand. He did a tremendous amount of work on the trinket-box in one short spell and finished it.

The Cuttyhunk was under sail again. Her decks were clean and her tryworks fires out. She had only set her smoky sails that morning, to cruise lazily along after a sportively inclined school of whales that spouted and fluked a few miles to leeward. Turk had worked his men cruelly of late. He was humane enough to let even the mutineers rest when there was neither profit nor wisdom in driving them. The whales were too far away for the boats to approach without grievous labor at the oars; the breeze was too light for the boats to sail well. It was enough to blow the old ship along with all her threadbare, patched canvas set, and the whales would be there until she reached them. The sea was still alive with squid; the whales still fed hungrily.

So men and mates rested. Dick was on watch, and did his last strokes of carving while sitting on the taffrail behind the wheel. Jed Roach had given him a tiny lock and key of cunning Chinese workman-

ship, which chimed four melodious notes, like temple bells, when locked or unlocked. Jed had raped it from one of his own few treasures, sturdily abstaining from telling about it. When the box was finished, only to Jed was it shown. Dick aroused him from a sound sailor's sleep in the waist boat.

'What about it, Jed? Pretty nice, hey?' Dick unlocked and locked the toy, cocking an ear to the musical chimes.

'Dunno es I ever see much finer, son,' said Jed, turning the box this and that way, squinting at it in critical style. 'You wuz a mite sloppy over thet thar last bit o' carvin', wuzn't you?'

The blemish was so tiny that only Jed's eagle eye could have picked it out. But Dick saw it. He snatched the box, told Jed to go sleep his head off, and went back to his perch and spent another hour making the fault good. Then, after a look around, and a call aloft to the masthead to stay awake and miss no spout that might rise near at hand, he stepped below. The lookouts were unlikely to report any spouts if an officer left the deck. Every man in the ship, of good or ill record, was so completely weary that unless kept to pitch by the mates or the Old Man, he would shut his eyes to all else but that unblinkable school of sperm on the distant horizon.

Dick knew it. He picked that moment to deliver his little offering because of that. No raucous hail of 'She blo-o-ows!' would bring skipper and mates tumbling out to surprise him away from his duty.

June sat on a corner of the table in the cabin,

sewing. She was gradually making herself an outfit of clothes more or less suitable for her barest needs. With Ben's very complete 'housewife,' and an old silken bedspread of Turk's, she had already fashioned herself two frocks. She still went barelegged, though her smooth, sun-gilded legs had the appearance of being clad in silk stockings. Jed Roach had made her canvas shoes, and Ben Barrett himself made the sennit for the soles. She needed no other cover for her head than her thick, glossy curls. She smiled as Dick appeared in the doorway, holding up the work she was doing. He was all primed to speak a pretty piece when he left the deck; now he opened his mouth, made a funny noise, and dumbly held out the box. He managed to strangle out:

'It's — f'r — you.'

Her eyes widened and a rosy color flooded her face. She jumped down from the table and ran to him, taking the box in both hands and pressing it to her breast. Then Dick recovered his self-assurance. She had kissed him once. Why be afraid of her now, just because she seemed to have suddenly grown up? He heard her delighted little exclamations — scarcely words — saw that she was as embarrassed as he had been a moment before.

'It's a little present, June. I made it myself,' he said, forcing a laugh to appear doggishly natural. She was so close to him. Her hair was tickling his nose. He slipped an arm about her, in a most respectful, semi-brotherly hug, pressing her warm, palpitant body against his side. A shudder rippled

through her, and she drew away. She looked up at him shyly, all blushing, her eyes big and wide.

'Oh, thank you so much, Dick,' she whispered. 'This is too good of you; I know how little time you have had. I shall love it, always.'

She ran into her little room. He returned to the deck, perky as a new-made corporal of marines. She had never acted like that before, and he had put his arm around her, too. He had made her blush. Girls he knew in that other life had not known how to blush; at least, nothing he did ever made them. He felt above himself. He walked forward, humming the old chantey he had heard sung that first wretched day at sea. He had learned it since; and somehow he felt less sore when he thought of that day, because he felt that the song no longer fitted him.

'Oh, poor old Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!
Oh, pity Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!'

He was abreast of the larboard bow boat. Voices were suddenly hushed. He stepped on to the rail, peering over the gunwales of the boat. Yerner was there, and Kopp, and another of the gang. They looked murderously at Dick as he stared quizzically at them. He knew that look, and laughed.

'Come on out o' that boat,' he said. 'We want birds of your feather where we can see 'em. Don't you get enough of boats, Yerner?'

'Aw, run along and tell Father Turk!' growled Yerner.

Dick had no intention of telling Turk anything; but he did keep a keener eye on those lads from then on. They had used his boat for their conference, whatever that might concern. For one thing, he immediately climbed in and sharply overhauled all the gear. Everything depended on the soundness of a whaleboat's gear. And everything seemed to be all right here. But Yerner would bear watching.

It was scarcely necessary to set a special watch, however, for in another hour a terrific period of whale-killing began that lasted another month, filled the ship bung-full, and almost killed the crew with soul-numbing weariness. The last whale was cut in at fever haste. A gale was threatened, and twice it seemed that the whale must be cut adrift. But Turk had been having one of his worst spells of illness. June had been at him day after day. He must get to a doctor or he'd surely die. He kept the men at the cutting in until the last scrap of blubber was aboard. They cleaned ship and poured the last cask full while running before the growling storm.

'Throw over the tryworks, Ben. This cruise is over as far as whalin's concerned,' said Turk wearily. 'I'm goin' to make land for wood and water, that's all. Then we'll git up and git fer home. I don't feel so good.'

CHAPTER XXVI

WOOD AND WATER

THERE was much wordy argument as the Cuttyhunk slogged through the roaring seas. She was running before them, and was snug enough, but now she was heavy with oil, and not quite as giddily lightsome as when empty. The seas were warm, but they began to pour aboard. The men developed sea sores; one old man insisted he was getting scurvy. The hatches were on all the time now; the men's quarters were darker than ever, reeking with oily bilge. And now that the tryworks had been hove overboard and the masthead hoops taken down, the business of whaling ended, men had too much idle time for contentment. A merchant ship the size of the Cuttyhunk would have been well manned with half the number of men she carried. They talked, as idle men will. And in the general discomfort of the dark and close forecastle and steerage, Turk had not felt it necessary to separate Yerner's gang from the rest or to chain them up again.

'He's runnin' into Suva, I calc'late,' a hopeful one said.

Suva was a good port for whalemen before tourist ships spoiled it and made it just another sight-seeing stopover.

'Is that where them brown gals are so fond of

sailors?' a younger one of Yerner's lot asked, licking his lips.

'You're darn right, m' lad!' the answer came. 'Fond of 'em cooked or raw. Cannibals in the Fee-jees, son, cannibals.'

'To my mind, he'll make for Papeete,' said another.

'Hell! What difference does it make?' Yerner put in sharply. 'What's he goin' to do with us? That's the question. How about it, Stoll?'

'How do I know?' grinned Stoll. 'Don't include me along with your bold mutineers. Why don't you go ask Father?'

'Don't fool yourself. You're the same as the rest of us,' Yerner snarled. 'We'll take care that you are, anyhow. You'd better make use of your chances there in the galley an' find out somethin'. Here's one as don't intend to let Mister Turk clap him in the jug.'

'Nor me!' was echoed in a dozen dark corners.

'You fellers row your own boat,' put in Chips. 'You don't belong in this company. I believe I'll remind the skipper es he forgot to put the irons onto you again.'

'That wouldn't be nice, would it, Kopp?' Yerner retorted smoothly; but there was a threat in that tone too. The gang drew together, apart from the others, and laid wild plans to be carried out in case Turk tried to jail them. It was fresh meat, fresh fruit, vegetables, and the smell of earth that more closely occupied the routine part of the crew. Hogg

was expected to know more than most, because he had been several voyages as an officer. But Hogg was not any brighter than others. In his opinion a whaleship went to regular cut-and-dried ports according to where she happened to be when water and wood were needed. If near the Bonins, she watered and wooded at Peel. If near the Fijis, she used Suva. Ships scarcely ever finished whaling twice in the same precise location; unless they followed a regularly laid-down track in their cruising voyage after voyage and experienced much the same sort of luck in their whaling. Then a dozen ships might finish together on the Solander grounds off New Zealand, and wood and water and provision almost invariably at Port Pegasus.

'Wall, he'll hev to put in somewhar. Don't matter much. But unless he do, he'll hev scurvy aboard right quick. I got it, I know that!' grumbled the old sailor, who should long ago have found snug harbor ashore. The terrific bout of whaling just ended had almost done for him.

'You ain't got scurvy, your teeth are just nat'rally partin' company with your jaws. You ought to ship in steamers. They feeds you soft grub an' hes stooardesses to nuss old shellbacks es is weak an' trimbly,' stated Mallet the cooper, very solemnly.

Aft, there was less concern about the port the ship headed for. Everybody there, except June, was due to share fairly generously in the profits of a full ship; to them, the thing most devoutly to be wished for was a fast passage home. Turk had almost decided

to put in somewhere and let a doctor overhaul him; but now his ship was bung-full, he felt better. He wanted to get home. He felt the universal urge, of man and beast alike, to crawl into the home burrow when sick. He felt better, but he knew it was only the temporary, fictitious improvement of revived hope. He wanted to be where his wife could tend him. He wanted old Doc Swain, if he must have a sawbones at all. Doc could set dogs' legs. Nothing so serious as a broken leg about Turk. Besides, any port where a doctor might be found was off his track for the Horn and home.

The gale blew for three days, driving the old ship sturdily along in a smother of burst seas and volleying spray. On the fourth day a speck appeared on the horizon ahead. The wind moderated a bit; the seas did not tumble aboard. Hatches were lifted and water casks hoisted. Men peered at the speck of land, sniffing as if they could already smell the rich warm earth. Of all smells that intrigue the senses of a sailor long at sea, the fragrance of upturned earth comes first. That of crushed raw potatoes next. Yerner and his precious brotherhood lined the rail forward, leaving the work at the tackles to others. Ben Barrett reminded Turk that those men were supposed to be under punishment.

'Don't worry about them,' Turk replied. 'There'll be work enough for them soon. Then I'll give them their choice again, of workin' the ship home or goin' passengers in irons.'

'If they works ship home, ain't you goin' to turn

'em over to th' police?' exclaimed Ben. 'After they knocked down an' tied up your officers; set you adrift in a boat; piled your ship ——'

'Avast bawlin',' Turk interrupted sharply. 'I ain't so crazy as to make 'em too many promises this end o' the voyage, Ben. Let 'em wait. Let 'em wonder. But don't you worry, they'll pay for their fun.'

Stoll staggered past loaded with salt beef for the galley. His shoulder had healed, and he had tried to escape from the humiliating servitude of the galley; but when that failed, and he still understudied Pluto, his shoulder mysteriously grew worse. Even that failed to move Turk. Master Stoll remained a swab, who had sailed third mate; and, moreover, he was not sure that he wasn't rated on a level with Yerner. He hurried forward with his brine-dripping beef; when he had a chance he passed on to Yerner what he had heard between skipper and mate. There was another wordy conference then, a sort of huddle in the bows, with the land ahead growing rapidly in size as the hours sped by.

Chips and the blacksmith went to work on the ship's supply of saws and axes, setting and sharpening them for the wood-cutting. The cooper walked around his water casks with mallet and iron. Dick and Jed, with a couple of hands, rigged burtons for the hoisting out and in of the casks. Ben Barrett, growling like a bear, oversaw all the various jobs. He had never heard of such a mad idea as Turk's. Leaving a bunch of mutinous dogs loose, with a

water and wood party just ahead. And axes and saws and boats ready to hand. He growled, but for the first time in his life afloat, he felt glad that he had kept that ancient pistol. Since he had had occasion to use it before, unwillingly, he now had it clean and oiled, and carried it inside his belt willingly.

But Turk knew what he was about. The island ahead grew in contours, until soon it could be clearly made out. Then dubious mutterings were heard. The respectable men of the crew grumbled because it was not the place any of them had guessed. Yerner's lot drew into a huddle again, whispering excitedly. Two of them turned aft and cursed Turk. He had brought the ship, for wood and water, back to the scene of their mad treasure quest.

'Keep quiet!' Yerner snapped at them. 'It's better than jail, ain't it?'

'How in hell kin a bunch o' men hide out in that two-by-four lot?' snarled Kopp.

'Plenty o' bush, ain't there? Let 'em try to get us back on this old blubber-hunter. Let 'em try to get *me!* The rest can suit yourselves.'

Turk waited until he had brought the island on the bearing for running through the reef entrance, then told the mate to get the anchor over, ready to let go. He had sail taken in until the ship blew easily along under no more than could safely be left on her while anchored in the lagoon, then told off the men for the various jobs so that there would be no delay when at anchor.

'Jed, pick you out six good men for fillin' the casks. You need buckets an' funnels at the spring. Dick, you take two likely lads for cuttin' wood. It don't 'pear to be heavy timber. Mister Barrett will hev th' rest o' th' men to help load the wood. 'Tis a fine day, an' ef you're right smart, you ought all hands to hev an hour or two of daylight left for stretchin' your legs before we put out for home. Pluto, you and th' stooard go see how about some o' that fresh hawg meat ashore there. Might be some sort o' fruit, or yams. Surely thar's palm cabbage. Take your boy along, Pluto, an' make him climb trees. Them hoodlums can stay aboard.'

Stoll swallowed the insult, as he had swallowed many. He was the kind who would. Anyhow, he was going on a fairly easy job. He waited, grinning at Yerner, wondering what was in store for the mutineers. They were wondering, too; all except Yerner. Yerner knew now that Turk was crazy. He meant to make the gang stay aboard; meant to deprive them of a shore jaunt. The gang tried to get Yerner's eye. This was going to upset all their little schemes. Kopp slithered up to Yerner, thumping him in the ribs.

'How about it?' he croaked. 'You lettin' him git away with that?'

'Shut up!' Yerner muttered. 'We'll all be left aboard here, an' nobody else except Turk an' the chippy! For Christ's sake, try to look sore!' That hint was necessary.

Kopp had suddenly seen the light. His evil face

was a mask of unholy glee. He weaved among his fellows, telling them the glad news; bidding them try to look sore. If Captain Turk bothered to look their way, he undoubtedly saw a downcast lot of rascals. They were so downcast that they aroused pity in the breast of the old whaleman who thought he had scurvy.

'Thet's a shame! I'll go speak to th' Old Man,' mumbled the ancient, full of the hope of fruit and bubbling water from the spring. 'A man hes rights. I'll tell him so.'

He would have shambled aft on his errand of mercy. Yerner seized him by the shirt, and hauled him back.

'Keep yer nose out o' this, unless you want to smell hell! Watch him, Kopp!'

The ship lost headway in the falling breeze. She swam slowly abreast of the entrance and squared away to run in. There was nothing more to do for half an hour until she came to anchor; and the men lounged in little knots. Everybody seemed at peace, unless perhaps it was the old sailor, who still grumbled at Yerner's rebuff, going from one to another for sympathy. Everybody seemed to have been given the task that pleased him best. Yet not all. The mate paced to and fro, muttering. He, too, believed Turk must be crazy. But Turk was not.

'Ben,' the skipper said as soon as the ship was headed in for the anchorage — 'Ben, might as well fasten them birds up now. They've had a right smart spell of liberty. Get Chips and the smith

an' run a chain through the irons when you get 'em on. Let 'em stay on deck. They'll be in the way of striking the casks below if you put 'em in the blubber-room.'

The order was given in a quiet tone; but Yerner's sharp ears had sensed its import. He started to yell, to warn the rest, but there was Turk, quiet and sure, with his own recovered revolver, and it seemed to cover every one of them.

Ten minutes later the ship swung to her anchor.

CHAPTER XXVII

A PARTY INTERRUPTED

Dick had found a fine clump of small cedars; excellent fuel for Pluto's galley stove, and for the cabin fireplace when the bitter seas of the Horn were faced. It would be winter when the Cuttyhunk doubled Old Stiff. His two lads sawed through the trunks, and Dick trimmed the logs with an axe. The day was mild and peaceful; the fresh cedar sawdust added a strong flavor to the rich tang of the sea. Down shore a flock of birds screamed, fighting over some stranded sea-food. In a clump of wild plum, fat pigs grunted and rooted, indifferent to Fate in the person of black Pluto, even then *chee-wheeching* knife on steel.

From time to time Dick glanced shipward. Jed's men were towing the casks ashore. Ben Barrett had a boat overboard and was being pulled around the ship, slapping red lead on the chain-plates, hammering down the copper here and there, where the edge showed ragged above water. Ben was making a quick job of it, as if expectant of other employment for the boat. His gruff voice could be heard clearly enough, hurrying his men along.

June ran around the rail, peeping down at Ben's boat now and then, impatiently it seemed; and Dick watched her with a queer feeling of expectancy.

She might be waiting for Ben to come ashore, to come with him.

'Get a move on, boys,' he urged his sawers. 'The sooner you get that wood piled, the sooner you take your ramble.'

When the mate's boat grounded on the beach, Dick had his fire logs all piled ready. When June jumped from the bow, laughingly declining Ben's labored offer of his shoulder, Dick was all ready.

'I've found a fine patch of ripe prickly pears,' he said. 'Like 'em?'

'Oh, yes! Have you brought some?'

'Come on. I'll take you. It's a pretty spot up among the oleanders.' Dick offered her a hand, and she would have taken it.

'Never you mind sight-seein' trips, young feller. Your job's here, ontil th' wood's aboard,' the mate growled. 'You run along, June, an' amuse yourself. Ain't nothin' to be afeared of around here now.'

Ben was in earnest. And June had not the cheery impudence of her first days aboard the Cuttyhunk. She looked at Dick, in momentary question, then set off alone. The day was too beatific, the warm earth too sweet, to permit of the wasting of an hour. Dick was hot and furious; he had been humiliated before June and his men; they were grinning; but after all the mate was right. Turk had said the men might have an hour's leeway after work was done.

The logs were loaded, and when the boat was full, leaving bare room for two men to row, the rest of the wood was rafted and towed. Then Ben took his

men to help Jed's gang roll the casks into the sea. And when all was alongside the ship, all hands turned to and slung water and wood aboard. Only the fresh pork remained, and as soon as Pluto's cleaned and scalded victims were hung, and half a dozen little live pigs were temporarily styed, the crew were given their brief scamper.

'Take care of June, Mister Edwards,' the skipper called out.

'I'll look arter her. I took her ashore, an' I guess I kin bring her aboard,' snapped Barrett.

When they landed, Dick headed toward the summit of the little island where the verdure was thickest and the grass grew. That was where June would be. Most of the men ran whooping along the shore to where the wild pigs had fed on wild plums until plums doomed them to pork. A few old sailors, knowing little of shore jaunts without the accompanying lure of grogshops and bright eyes, had brought fishing lines and waded along the coral rocks on a busman's holiday. Nobody followed Dick except Ben. The men had no relish for things or places that attracted officers.

'Jest a minit, *Mister* Edwards!' snapped Ben, overhauling Dick and catching his arm as they entered the grassland.

Dick turned sharp at the tone. He saw the mate's grim face all working with pent-up wrongs. That *Mister* had all the venom of studied insult, and Ben's grip on his arm was like a steel claw.

'What's the trouble, Ben? Can't you leave a

grouch behind on a day like this? I want to stretch my legs for once in comfort. I'm not sore at you. Why should you be sore at me?'

They were walking on, under small trees, brushing through ragged banana groves. Ben would have stopped, but Dick had an objective, and Dick with a definite point in view was not easily stopped, short of violence.

'Never mind my grouch, or bein' sore,' snarled Ben. 'I'm goin' to hev my say now. You been cocky es a steamboat fourth mate ever since you was made *Mister* Edwards, and there's a lot more I don't like about you. You're still a greenhorn es fur es you go with me.'

Dick laughed indulgently. He was feeling fine. He caught sight of June through the trees; she was darting here and there, picking things from the ground. They were blossoms; or, it might be, prickly pears. Up there on the crest of the tiny island was a spacious greensward from which all the shore was visible, and the outer reef with its creaming surf and its riot of sea color. He was determined not to let Ben Barrett spoil his pleasure.

'Don't be foolish, Ben,' he said. 'I'm sorry if you don't like me. You may have had cause once, but you have none now, unless you're jealous of my progress. I can't help it if Cap'n Turk thinks I am good enough to live aft. If anybody felt sore, it ought to be Jed Roach. He told me he heard I was to change places with him homeward bound, but he wasn't sore. Why should you be? You might if I

was to be shoved over your head, which isn't likely as long as you behave yourself. Lay off me, old-timer. Be yourself.'

Dick walked on, head in air, for June had seen him and was waving a hand. Ben's grip fell from his arm, but it was not because of any change in purpose. Dick placidly swept the mate and his grouch from his mind, waving back at June. Ben pushed ahead of him, turned, and laid a broad palm against his chest. Dick saw now that Ben's temporary subsidence was entirely due to choking rage.

'You go over my head?' the mate stuttered. 'Blast your eyes, thet's what Turk hinted at! I'm goin' to take you aboard in sech shape you won't be fit to go over nobody.'

Dick was still pressing ahead. Ben's hand against his chest now stopped him short. That horny, broken-knuckled paw was quivering; Ben's eyes glittered not a foot behind it. They stood in a small glade, and the ship lay clearly in view from it. A clump of bougainvillea was between them and the open sward of the island crest. Men's voices could be heard in all the distance; old Jed shouted something, and June's clear voice answered. The lulling murmur of the surf and the drone of insects filled the warm air. All seemed eminently fitted for peace; and one man was able to spoil it. Dick was as stubborn for peace as he had often been for battle. He pushed Ben's hand aside.

'Don't bother me, Ben,' he said sharply, yet still with a smile.

Ben thrust his hand back, doubled now into a formidable fist, but simply stopping Dick, not striking. Dick was getting angry. All he wanted was to run up there and help June pick prickly pears, and here was this scowling old shellback bent on a fight.

Dick struck the hand away now, and so strong was Ben's pressure, so sharp Dick's stroke, that the mate stumbled and all but fell. Recovering, and grinning with rage, he swung a punch at Dick's head, and Dick coolly ducked under it, refusing to hit back. And there, for thirty seconds, they stood face to face, Ben slugging blindly, and Dick ducking or stopping the punches, never trying to hit Ben, a confident grin on his face.

Two wandering sailors broke through the bush, and stood there pop-eyed. The mate mumbled and muttered, and slogged wildly. Dick scarcely moved his feet, but never a blow did more than brush him. Ben's fury cooled. He stepped back, conscious of his futility while in blind fury, suddenly getting a grip on his wits; and now Dick saw he was in for a fight. Old Ben Barrett blind with rage was one thing, Ben Barrett in cool earnest quite another.

'I don't want to fight you ——' Dick began.

Other men had gathered around, beckoned by the first two. It was going to be rich, this battle of their officers. June and Jed were coming near, too. As Dick began to speak, he saw Ben's rugged face crack in a sort of smile of understanding. Of course Dick didn't want to fight, with all hands and that

girl there to see him whipped. But Dick's speech was cut short, not by Ben. A shot rang out from the ship. It shattered the island stillness like a cannon. Birds took to the air in screaming flocks. Men looked toward the ship in alarm.

'The recall flag's flyin'!' shouted one.

'Them toughs!' another.

'Ben! Dick! We be wanted aboard, I reckon!' yelled Jed Roach, bursting into view, with June running beside him, all wide-eyed with alarm.

'Captain Turk's alone except for Stoll!' she cried.

To Ben Barrett's credit be it said that when his ship and his skipper were in peril, he let his personal business wait.

'Get aboard, all hands!' he shouted, and led the way to the boats. Every man was off the beach in five minutes. As they approached the ship, eyes and ears were strained. There was no sign of trouble, no sound; but neither was Turk in sight. Nobody was in sight. The men followed Ben and Dick and Jed over the side in silence, not knowing what horror they might find or what reception awaited them.

There was nothing but a bare deck, at first. No blood. No dead men. In a moment Stoll popped up from the main hatch, with Pluto after him. Then Turk came out of the companionway, and he looked angry, not hurt.

'Hoist the boats, and get your anchor, Mister Barrett. Let's get the ship to sea.'

There was no more. Just that curt order to get the ship to sea. Men grumbled. Their shore leave

had been cut short. There was no weather making up. It was nothing more than the whim of a sick skipper. The boats were hoisted raggedly, and swung in and made secure. The anchor was dragged to the bows, catted, fished, and stowed. The ship slipped out through the reef, her light sails going up as she went, and until every last stitch filled to the evening breeze a strange silence pervaded her decks. There was no cheery homeward-bound chorus; no anchor song; no jesting or horse-play. Even the mates sensed something not quite right. June had spoken to Turk on coming aboard, anxiously, as if fearful that he had been suddenly taken worse. She had been curtly rebuffed; now she stood on the skids, holding on to the mizzen rigging, looking as if she, too, were angry.

The mates, at least, were soon to know what was wrong. As soon as the gear was all hung up ship-shape and the course was set, Turk abruptly told the three mates to follow him to the cabin.

'I was watchin' you all through th' glass,' he said. ''Twas your fault this time, Barrett. Oh, shut up! I know all about it. Now you listen to me. We're homeward bound; I ain't a well man; be damned if I want a hurrosh among my afterguard. Jed, Mister Edwards knows a bit o' navigation. You don't. He'll hev to go second mate instid o' you. 'Twon't make no difference t' your lay. I want to know in case I git worse thar's one man I kin depend on to take a sight.'

'Thet's what I told you to do fust off,' nodded

Jed Roach, happy over Dick's promotion. 'Sure, it suits me.'

'It don't suit me ——' Ben started to growl.

Turk held up his hand.

'I'll talk to you in a minute,' he said. 'Stay here with me. Thet'll do, you two.'

Jed and Dick went on deck. Then Turk turned upon the mate.

'Now, listen, Ben Barrett! You lay off young Dick. He ain't a greenhorn no more. He's a damned good man, and you know it. You tried your damnedest ashore thar to tease him into a scrap, an' he was man enough to laugh at you.'

'Th' consarned pup!' growled Ben. 'And you make his head bigger'n it is a'ready by makin' him second mate! He ain't man enough yet, by th' Great Squid! Ef you hadn't fired thet gun an' flew thet urgent flag, I'd hev whittled him down to whar he belongs. Thet's what old Peter Edwards is payin' me fer!'

Captain Turk slowly broke into a quiet grin. He had almost forgotten that pact with Peter Edwards.

'I won't deny that, Ben. But seems to me young Dick's purty much man-size now, becos of you or in spite of you. And seems to me thet was what his father wanted, ruther than hevin' him shaved down. Anyway, Peter ain't payin' you to keep everlastin' after th' lad until you break him. If he was, you'd lose, fer you can't do thet now. Dick's too much for you. He's a he-man right now, an' if you don't hold off him, he's likely to whittle you down.'

'Whittle me down? Hell's hobs! I'll believe that when he busts my nose again, Cap'n Turk. An' I'll give him his chance. No man ever busted my nose before an' got away without payin'.'

'Seems I heard tell how Peter did once,' smiled Turk. Ben flinched. 'Anyway, it's my advice you leave Dick be. If anythin' happens to me this passage, it'd please old Peter fine now, wouldn't it, to see th' ship come home with young Dick in command?'

'When Peter sees that, he'll see Ben Barrett licked, an' he kin keep his greasy shares!' snorted Ben.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A SICK SKIPPER

Dick was soon called on to show his navigational ability. As soon as the islands were well astern, Yerner and his cronies were released again and kept at work. Turk told the mate to set in hand the complete scraping, polishing, and painting of every bit of iron in the ship. That alone kept Ben and the culprits too busy to think of anything else. And Turk relaxed. Once he knew his ship was safely on her long passage, with nothing ahead nearer than Cape Horn, he took to lying down often. At first he kept check on Dick's figures. After a week he felt it was no longer necessary. Dick was a born seaman. He took to navigation as he had taken to whaling.

One day, when he had secured a good fix after several days of cloudy weather, he signaled a passing steamer for his correct position. He carried the resulting comparison down to the skipper in carefully hidden glee.

'Checks to two miles, sir! Our chronometer's keeping its rate, too. I got a comparison.'

'That's fine, Dick. Fine,' Turk said quietly.

Dick peered at him. June was trying to indicate something to him by signs. The skipper was pallid; almost yellow. He smiled at Dick, but that was no healthy smile.

'I thought you'd like to know, sir,' Dick murmured, and went out of the stateroom.

June followed him.

'Dick, he's very sick,' she whispered. 'I saw that steamer coming, and told him. I asked if he would stop her and have the doctor see him. He held me until he heard you coming.'

'I'll speak to the mate,' said Dick.

He told Ben, and Ben regarded him sourly.

'What d'you want me to do?' demanded Ben.

'You ought to advise him to put in somewhere. He ought to be taken care of.'

'You figger you're goin' home skipper o' this ship yet, don't you?'

'Oh, don't talk like a damned booby! You're the mate. You ought to see him. I tell you he's ill.'

Turk appeared aft at that moment, stepping briskly, looking around at ship and sea, sniffing the breeze.

'Thar!' said Ben. 'Thar's your sick man! You're too darn perky, *Mister* Edwards! Better pipe down.'

Dick knew just how much of that breeziness was due to Turk's obstinate refusal to give in. He never forgot that glimpse he had in the stateroom. Turk was ill, and June was right.

Days were shorter and colder; nights held a keen tang that sent men hunting Turk's slopchest for warmer clothing as the ship made her southing. Turk let Dick issue the slops, and keep the account for him; and Dick was correspondingly full of pride. This conducting of a business which was the skip-

per's own perquisite gave him the intimate feeling of importance that soon was magnified into a natural enough whimsy of mastership. If June happened to pass while he was breaking out watch coats, or boots, or mittens for serious-faced old seadogs trying to appear wise in their unchoiced purchases, Dick did not grin up at her as he perhaps might have done six months ago; but he put on a more assured air of mentorship toward the men.

'You take that, my lad. It's big now, but your first lookout when the spray flies'll bring it down to your measure.'

It was upon the bad conduct lot that the colder days and nights bore hardest. They had been told their shares had ceased to accrue when their fault was committed. There was no extra clothing for them. Yerner complained to the mate, who told him to work and stir his blood. But Ben was not as hard as he tried to make out, even toward rascals. He secretly cut up an old topgallantsail and left it where it would be stolen; then told the cooper to suggest to Yerner and his pals that old canvas made fine clothes if a man was industrious enough to sew for himself.

Indirectly that led up to trouble. One of Yerner's most useless henchmen saw no reason for sewing when others could do it so much better, and stole another man's canvas coat. There was a fight; and it ended suddenly with the owner falling to the deck bleeding from a knife stab. That was the first evidence of weapons among Yerner's lot.

'Bring 'em all aft,' said Turk, when the mate reported it.

The culprits were mustered aft, and the skipper had them all searched. There were quite a few knives. When the men had been searched to the hide, and their knives taken away, Turk gave them a short, crisp speech. He gave them once and for all the choice of working their way and keeping the peace or completing the voyage in irons. And the weather, they were assured, was going to be bad for men in irons.

'I don't know how you got them knives, but I'll find out, an' th' man who got 'em for you had better keep his weather eye liftin',' he concluded. 'What d'you want to do, my lads?'

'I'll say somethin' now!' barked Yerner, dragging around him Kopp and the rest. 'We want to know how we stand right now. You work us like bloody horses, an' we're likely to freeze for all you give a damn! We ask you what's the game when you get us home. I tell you, for all of us, we don't go to no jail! What about it?'

Turk sighed. He was standing up only through sheer will.

'You'll find out soon enough,' he returned. 'I'll not swap words with you. One thing's sartain, though; ef you goes home in irons, you'll surely go straight into jail soon's we moor. That'll be all. Turn 'em to, Mister Barrett.'

When back at their jobs, Ben indulged his own ideas regarding them.

'I'll tell you birds what I'd do!' he growled. 'Ef I was master o' this ship, you'd never have been let out of irons. You'd have et biscuit an' drunk water every blasted day since you cut rough, an' you'd go to jail in the end without any mincin' o' words. You'd better all hope es th' skipper keeps his health!'

That didn't make the gang any more comfortable. They knew the skipper was a sick man. They drew more and more to themselves, madder and madder as the days sped by, because there was nothing they could do about it. The ship was plunging along through chilly seas, and there was neither land nor hope of land that would help them. They were kept secure at night, and at work each one of them found he was placed alongside a solid man of the crew who kept a wary eye on him. Stoll was so much of an outcast himself that he tried to pass them little bits of comfort; but Hogg, thoroughly ashamed of his own disgrace and bravely trying to make good again, took a delight in shadowing his former brother officer and robbed the gang of even Stoll's small help. By the time the ship had come within measurable distance of the Horn, Yerner found himself leader of a gang made more desperate because of the very futility of their desperation. They never approached a boat but what they regarded its snug security of heavy-weather lashings as a personal affront. They never worked beside a decent sailor without estimating the chances of turning upon him and beating him down. But, like all of their kind, they were gang

creatures, with very little man-to-man courage. They found themselves singularly helpless. They cursed Yerner by night, and only drew from him a cryptic command to wait and see; to leave it to him.

Aft, Dick was in his element. Turk had not taken to his bed entirely. He still appeared on deck each day. But now the navigation was all in Dick's hands, and daily practice was making him adept. He had no doubts any longer regarding his figures. When he took the reckoning down to the skipper one steely-blue day, and told him they had reached almost far enough south to clear the Horn, he did not ask advice, but stated with complete assurance:

'The glass is steady, sir, but there's wind coming from the eastward. I'll haul to the sou'ard a bit more while the weather's clear.'

'That's right, Dick,' Turk agreed. 'Better make your southin' sure before you hev to buck an easterly. Thicker 'tis, th' wuss 'tis down south.'

June was sleeping in her clothes on the settee in Turk's stateroom, and the skipper glanced at her before saying more. In his weary face was a strangely soft light as he looked at the sleeping girl. When he turned to Dick, his eyes glistened.

'Dick, that's one o' the sweetest gals Gawdlemighty ever put breath into. She's a blessed angel. You look after her if we hit dirty weather. Tired out, she is, poor gal, lookin' after me.' He looked around, licking his lips, and Dick gave him the water glass, feeling a little alarmed. Turk looked deathly in the bad light.

'Dick, I'm glad you come to your senses an' larned to be a sailor. Your father was one o' the finest whalemen ever struck a whale. He'll be a proud man, Dick. You come nigh hurtin' him bad once. When you get home ——'

'He thinks I'm dead by now!' said Dick harshly. 'How does he know where I disappeared to that night Ben shanghaied me? That was a dirty trick! I haven't settled that score with Barrett yet, but I will, and ——'

Turk was smiling. It was a wan and weary smile, but it made him seem almost well again.

'I meant to tell you somethin', Dick. Maybe I ought to spill it now.'

The ship gave a lurch and a stagger. A log of wood fell from the grate in the cabin, and Dick ran to replace it. When he looked in again, the steward was taking Turk some soup, and June was rubbing her eyes, all ready to feed him. There was a sound on deck of ropes being flung down and sail coming in. Dick went up to resume his watch; he wondered what Turk had to tell him. In half an hour he had forgotten that there was anything. The mate had taken in the royals and gafftopsail. Where there had been a steely-blue sky a dense bank of either snow or fog was creeping over the gray sea.

CHAPTER XXIX

GROWLINGS

Snow lay in the lee waterways. Icicles hung from yards and stays. The easterly breeze blew cold and right in her teeth, but had not hardened beyond the ship's power to carry on under good working canvas. All work had stopped, except the infrequent trimming of sails. Iron was too cold to chip or paint. Men grumbled about the cold.

Forward, the man stabbed in the fight over a canvas coat moaned in his comfortless bunk. The chill had got into his wound, and he was afraid to go aft for attention. Stoll had been aft, whining about the pain in his shoulder, and had been given rum. He told the man to do the same. But even rum had no power to carry the fellow aft while Ben Barrett had the watch. Stoll had chosen a time when Jed Roach was in charge; and Jed took Stoll to Turk, who, too weary to bother, simply told Jed to give the man a shot of grog to ease the pain. Stoll tried the trick again, when Ben was on deck, and found his mistake. Ben dragged him into shelter, tore open coat, shirt, and singlet, and thumbed and prodded the shoulder as if it were a piece of mutton. Stoll made a fuss, but in face of Ben's grim nod of understanding did not insist on rum.

'An' if you comes aft on sech hell-b'ilin' business

again, I'll give you a real sore shoulder to cry over,' said Ben.

Stoll tried hard to make that other man go to Ben. Stoll was that sort of a brute.

Dick and June ate dinner together. Dick had waited on deck while the other mates ate, trying to catch a sight of the sun for an ex-meridian latitude. He got a flying shot, and then the snow settled down in a gray pall that promised badly for future observations. But he felt confident of the ship's position. The ship stood on to the south.

'Ben was grumbling to Jed about going so far south,' June said. 'I was afraid he was going to bother Captain Turk about it.'

Dick did not answer that, but he looked hard at the girl while he ate his pea soup. She had dark rings about her eyes, and her lips were less red. It was a subdued, weary, brave June. She saw that he was watching her and not taking much notice of what she was saying. He smiled when her eyes met his; and then she laid down her spoon and burst out into broken speech.

'I'm afraid, Dick! I think he's going to die! And it's all because of me. I feel like a murderer!'

'Hush!' Dick soothed her, reaching for her hand. 'You mustn't say things like that, June. Your care of him is going to make him well. Nobody in the world could do as much for him as you are doing. Not even his own doctor or his wife. You mustn't upset yourself ——'

'Oh, don't try to soothe me with words! Don't I

know? If I had not come aboard, none of this trouble would have happened! There would have been no silly talk of treasure and no mutiny. They'd never have left Captain Turk to die in that boat. He'd never have had all this bother with the men. Oh, Dick, if he dies, I'll feel like dying, too.'

'He shan't die, June. He can't die with your care. Go and have a good rest. Undress and go to bed properly. I'll look after him until I go on watch again. Go along. You need more than just cat-naps on a sofa with all your clothes on.'

He helped her from the table, and urged her toward her room. She obeyed him like a tired child. At her door she turned and put up her face to be kissed. It was a gesture of purest childish weariness. Dick felt almost patriarchal. He kissed her lips with reverence. He had much to think about that afternoon as he sat beside Turk, hidden by the bunk curtains, reading avidly from the 'South Atlantic Pilot.'

Ben Barrett was in a bitter mood when Dick relieved him in the dogwatch. The old fellow was iced from sou'wester to boots, and puffs of snow had frozen on his cheek-bones. The ship still shouldered her way south-by-east, bursting a sea into a spray now and then that thickened her already stout armor of ice.

'Ef you keep on to th' s'uthard, you'll soon git to ice,' Ben growled.

'We're not far enough east yet to stand north, Ben.' Dick was not in argumentative mood. He was thinking about Turk's condition.

'Can't you tack ship again ef you runs foul o' the land?'

'It's not safe, thick like this. I've never been around the Horn in bad weather, but I've heard enough about it. We'll stand on awhile longer.' As the mate shook and stamped off the snow before going below: 'Better step in and look at the Cap'n, Ben. He looks very bad to me.'

'That's what I'm goin' to do!' snapped Ben, and tramped down the stairs.

Ben entered the skipper's room just as he was, all bundled up in clothes and wet with melting snow. He made a little puddle on the carpet, standing there trying to discern Turk in the full light.

''Lo, Ben. What's th' good word?' Turk said.

Ben was shocked at the voice. It sounded as if the steam behind it was very low in the gauge. Instead of making him adjust his own voice, that sign of weakness in Turk only strengthened the mate's resolve to have a showdown.

'Good words is scarce,' he growled. 'You're down here on your back; purty middlin', I should say. Thet young squirt Dick claims you've sot him to navigatin' an' left it all in his fist. Do you know th' ship's 'most froze? He's still standin' south. I'm only fust mate aboard o' this hooker, Cap'n Turk. Might es well be galley swab fur's I kin see.'

Turk moved restlessly on his bed. He tried to reach his water glass. Ben handed it to him, and received another shock. The skipper's hand was little more than a fleshless claw.

'Ben, why do you keep everlastin' after young Dick?'

'Th' cocky monkey's puttin' on dog afore he's arned th' right, thet's why! How come me, nigh forty year whalin', hes to stand by an' sail a traverse sot by a youngster es never smelt salt water ontil this v'yage?' Ben turned and stumbled across the room, but not out. Oh, no! He had more to say. 'I tell you, Cap'n Turk, jest es man to man, you better not slip your cable if you're so fond o' Dick Edwards. He'll smell hell if I ever takes holt!'

'Ben, I always found you a good mate,' Turk said with strange quiet.

'So I am! So I allus was!' snapped Ben. 'It's you es is bent on makin' me a dadburned fool!'

'I ain't aimin' to, Ben.' Turk turned in pain, biting on a groan. 'You've done well by Dick. You made a man out of him. An' because he's a man, I'm easy in my mind now about the ship. He's that much of a man he'll need no certif'cate when his dad sees him. I'm feelin' purty mean, Ben. Reckon maybe I might brace up an' git around ag'in if I kin rest comfortable here awhile until we hit warmer weather. Why can't ——'

'Warmer weather! Hobs o' hell, Cap'n, do you expect to strike warmer weather headin' t'wards th' blasted pole?'

'Dick's right in that!' A spark of impatience sharpened Turk's retort. 'Head winds an' snow an' thick weather's the time to keep clear o' Stiff. You knows that, Ben Barrett. Why can't you sail th'

ship, an' leave Dick navigate? He ain't puttin' himself above your head in handlin' th' ship, is he?'

'He knows better'n that!'

'Then you ought t' be able to agree. What makes you hate th' boy this way? You hed a likin' fer him once.'

'Who said I hated him?' Ben cried angrily. 'He ain't got a better friend than me, an' you knows it!'

'You show it mighty queer.'

'I'll show it any way thet suits me, Cap'n Turk, until ——'

'Still chawin' on thet bargain with old Peter? Forget it. I've told you many times you've done all you can. Th' lad's man-size an' beyond you, Ben.'

'You ain't seen th' perky grin he gives me every time he sets course!'

'Thet's the boy in him.'

'Well, es long es th' boy's in him, I'll keep after him! When I've licked thet grin off his mug, an' he kin call me Mister Barrett without all hands knowin' he's laughin' at me, I'll be proud to give Dick Edwards my flipper an' call my busted snoot paid fer in full. An' don't you yammer no more about me hatin' th' lad. If I hated him, he'd be shark-meat long ago!' Ben turned at the door, in leaving, to say, 'Hope you soon feel easier, Cap'n.'

'Thank you, Ben. Jest tell Dick to look in when he comes below. I want to tell him somethin'. No hurry. Oh, Ben, before you peel your wet duds off, pass th' word to Yerner I want to see him. No use carryin' a grievance out o' reason.'

The mate knew now how ill Turk was. But he passed the word and sent Yerner aft. He stayed forward talking to the carpenter for a while, but Dick and Jed were aft to see that Yerner got into no mischief

Dick saw Yerner duck below and would have questioned him had he not seen the mate give the order. Yerner wore a grin as he went by the skylight. Obviously he believed he had been singled out by Turk for special treatment. Perhaps for reinstatement. Dick looked through the skylight glass. He could see most of the stateroom doors. Yerner did not pass to the skipper's door. He could have no other business down there. The pantry was forward of that. The steward had not yet come aft to prepare supper, though it was about time. Dick had a suspicion that Yerner was seizing a fine opportunity to snoop for cabin food. He glanced around at sea and sky, along the decks, gave a word to the helmsman to keep a keen lookout, then quietly stepped below.

He saw nothing for a moment, coming into the dim cabin. But he heard a scuffling. It was in the pantry. Just as he suspected. He reached the door of the tiny place in two jumps, and filled the doorway with his body. Yerner was there. So was June. He had her in his arms, smothering her indignant outcry with lecherous kisses. She beat at his face with strong hands, but he had the strength of sudden flaming lust and the courage of unexpected opportunity.

Dick uttered no word. He reached, gripped, and hauled Yerner out; June dragged in that vicious hug, too. There was no pretense of sportsmanship in Dick's attack. He twisted Yerner's arms free of the girl's writhing body, and backed the fellow against the bulkhead. Then he thrust a knee up, pinning Yerner, and drove short, cutting punches into the snarling face until the snarl was cut and beaten into a whine. Twice Yerner dropped through his hold, twice Dick hauled him up to hammer him again. When the man flung all manhood to the winds and started crying from pain and fright, Dick dragged him to the stairs, booted him up them, and hurled him out onto the frozen deck.

'Did thet feller Yerner come down yet?' the skipper asked June when she went in, trying to conceal her agitation.

'He came down, but Dick sent him up again, I think,' she said.

'Stick your purty head out and tell Dick I want Yerner jest a minute.'

She did so. Dick passed the word. Ben Barrett was staring at Yerner's ribboned face, wondering what sort of sick skipper had done that.

'I thought I told you th' skipper wanted you,' he growled.

'Tell him I ain't comin'!' sobbed Yerner.

CHAPTER XXX

ICE!

THE ship was put on the other tack in the middle watch. The lookout had reported ice to leeward. Little cakes tinkled alongside. Hogg, working well, trying his best to redeem himself, was a good ice detecter. He stood a bitter lookout in the foretop for a full four-hour watch. It was he, coming down for hot coffee almost stiff with cold, who surprised Stoll and Yerner at the larboard bow boat. They were unlashing the heavy-weather gripes and leaving the boat fast by simple hitches only. Yerner ran like a rat when Hogg dropped out of the fore-rigging right beside him. Stoll, less beaten, tackled Hogg with a confident assumption that his one-time after-guard comrade would be a good sport. Hogg was a good sport. He was playing the game for his ship. He took Stoll in a deep-water grip and shoved him against the boat.

'Go to work now an' gripe her up again,' he growled. 'What's th' big idea, anyway?'

'Hell! You don't think we're goin' home to get jailed?' snapped Stoll. 'If we do, you're in it, too. Be a sport. He's standin' up t'wards th' land, ain't he? We're goin' to take a chance in a boat before he gets a chance to clap us in th' jug.'

'Go on, gripe her up!' said Hogg. He was chilled through after four hours aloft in the bitter night,

but he meant to stand over Stoll until that boat was fast. 'I'm willin' to take my chance at home,' he said. 'Until we get there, I'm for th' ship if I am only a fo'c'sle hand. Get busy. If Ben Barrett ketches you foolin' with a boat he'll ——'

'To hell with Barrett! You, too! Wait 'til I tell the gang who stopped our game. You'll smell seven kinds of hell.'

'All right. Make that boat fast, that'll be all. And I'm watchin' you and th' gang too.'

Another day broke. A blizzard blotted out the sky; the sea leaped viciously; there was a whip to the wind that staggered the old ship and kept her decks streaming with icy water. Small floes of ice clashed at her blunt bows; not dangerous yet, for she had heavy sheathing at the stem that could stand heavier ice than that, but occasionally a small berg loomed out of the murk, and that was disquieting.

It was when the bergs sailed past that Dick realized how valuable experience might be. He was glad to see old Ben Barrett take hold of the sailing of the ship like a thorough seaman. Dick was keeping track of the course and distance run, and knew within a few miles where the land might be. Unless that ice grew into something much heavier to windward, preventing the tacking of the ship to the southward again, all was well. If bergs closed in to the south when the land was close aboard to the northward, the only thing for the ship's safety would be to turn and run west. That was not to be

thought of except as a final resource. Captain Turk must be got ashore as quickly as possible. He was in bad shape. Even the mate had condescended to tell Dick he was afraid the Old Man was slipping his cable. June had been crying softly all morning. Turk scarcely breathed. He did not open his eyes now when anybody went in. Dick had studied old logs and recent 'Pilots' until he came to the conclusion that the only thing that could save the skipper was to run in to the Falklands and put him in a hospital at once. That meant that the ship must hold on in the teeth of the rising gales, hedged in by the devil of the Horn on one side, and the deep sea of icebergs on the other. It would be a piece of luck, even with the best of contrivance, to weather the Horn. Once let them turn and run west, and they would surely bury Captain Turk in bitter seas which gave even dead men no rest.

'She ain't doin' her best with them t'gallants'ls,' the mate remarked, peering anxiously aloft. The long topgallant masts were shipping in the plunges.

'We can't ease her, Ben, if she's to work to windward,' Dick replied. He felt warm at Ben's attitude. He believed the grim old fellow meant to work smoothly with him.

'You won't do th' skipper any good by wreckin' his ship on Cape Stiff!'

'We won't wreck her, Ben. But we can't run her off, and if we run back, you can bid Cap'n Turk good-bye. Can't the men stretch an extra backstay

or two? It'd keep 'em warm and stop their grumbling.'

'You leave th' workin' of th' ship to me!' snapped Ben with his old savagery. He glared into Dick's face as he spoke; but he leaned to the wind and plunged forward. Soon his lusty bellow was starting men from cozy corners; dark shapes moved among the whirling snow aloft. The mate drove them pitilessly, working out on them the spleen aroused by the admission that Dick's suggestion was a good one.

Toward evening the ice was heavier. The reckoning set the ship close to the land. Hogg was aloft again. He had made no single attempt to plead for reinstatement; he was playing the game like a good sailorman who has been foolish and knows it, letting actions speak for him. Jed Roach had been sniffing the wind for hours past, unerringly reporting ice by scent almost as quickly as Hogg reported it from aloft by sight above the thickness or the sound of seas breaking against it. Ben Barrett had not been below all day, except to eat hurriedly. He kept growling about the land. Dick was getting uneasy, too. He believed his reckoning was true; that the ship was sufficiently to windward to weather the Cape on that tack. But there was a doubt; and he was torn between the uncertainty of inexperience and the courage of youth. Without any doubt at all, if the ship had to go about now, she must turn and run. Ice lay heavy to seaward. She dare not tack that way. Land lay to the northward and westward, he hoped; if he had reckoned rightly, they would

just clear the Horn without tacking. If she could carry sail enough!

Twice had the mate insisted that the topgallantsails must come in or the spars go. Dick had insisted that they hold on to them. They had reefed the foresail and mizzen-topgallantsail, and if sail were taken in after that, it was all up with windward work in that wind and sea. The crew huddled about wherever they found a lee; the gang of rebels stayed in a close bunch in the forepeak for warmth. Body warmth was all they had, and the breath of scared mutterings.

'I smell ice close to!' bawled Jed suddenly.

'Tall berg on weather bow!' yelled Hogg from aloft.

'Run her off!' barked Ben, turning to the helmsman and reaching out to the wheel.

Dick stayed his hand. 'Hold your course!' he snapped. 'Sing out, Hogg! D'you see it, Jed?'

Like a white ghost of leering doom the berg slid out of the white swirls to windward and breathed a chilly breath on the ship. Seas leaped at its flanks. It rolled and twisted. But it missed the Cuttyhunk, and that was enough.

'Keep her full and bye,' Dick ordered the helmsman, and wondered at his own coolness. Seasoned old Jed Roach even looked staggered when that icy monster danced past.

'Dyin' or not, I'm goin' to see if Turk'll stand fer this!' swore Barrett, and blundered off down the companionway. 'He's a sight better off dead than

jest waitin' to be drownded! Ef he wuz dead, I'd be able to save his ship for his missus, anyhow!' He shouted that back at Dick as he descended.

He was back in a few minutes.

'You better go down. He don't know me. June says he's been askin' arter you an hour past, but she thought he was ramblin'. 'Tis all he says. Dick, jest Dick. You'd think he wuz your dad!'

'I'll see what he wants. Don't let her fall any to looard. I have a feeling we're closing in on the land.'

'Don't you tell me what to do!' snarled Ben. 'I've stood about enough from you.'

'Well, don't forget there's ice to windward, too.'

Dick was uneasy about leaving the deck. Ever since he had taken June from Yerner's arms, he had felt tremendously bucked in importance. The mate's seeming resignation to the situation helped, too. Ben had not worn that disguise long, truly, but long enough for Dick to get the feeling of actual command well rooted in him. The tone he used in that last remark, leaving the deck, was well calculated to let Ben Barrett know that Captain Turk still held the deck by proxy, and that proxy was Dick Edwards. It was Ben's change of attitude ever since those preventer backstays were fitted which gave Dick that uneasy feeling as he went below.

The moment he stepped into Turk's room, all other considerations were forgotten. June sat under the swinging lamp, deeply immersed in the ship's medicine chest instruction book. The steward wandered around the outer cabin like a lost soul.

'I've given him the last of his medicine, Dick, and I don't know what to do,' whispered June. 'He scarcely breathes. He's cold.'

Dick leaned over the bunk. Turk seemed to know he was there, though he never opened his eyes. He felt for Dick's hand and his thin, cold fingers fastened on it, drawing Dick to him.

'Dick, I'm slippin' my cable,' he murmured. 'Reckon I carried on too long.'

'Don't say that, sir,' Dick said hurriedly. 'We'll have you into Port Stanley in no time! We're weathering Old Stiff in fine style.'

'You may, but I won't. I know when my shackle's loose. You an' Ben must work together. My share's all my missus'll hev, Dick. Ben's th' finest sailorman afloat, but he's afraid of a sextant. I depend on you ——' There was a dry, hacking interruption. Turk quivered along the length of him. 'I depend on you, Dick, to get th' ship — th' ship — home.' Another choking interruption, then: 'I've wrote in th' log about June. My missus'll take care of her. An' there's somethin' I want to say, Dick, about Ben keepin' arter you. It's —— It wuz all your ——'

Turk was silent. Dick leaned low over him. There was some message still unsaid. The fingers that clutched his hand had no feeling of life. June crept to the bunkside. The steward, from out in the cabin, sensed something that Dick had not yet grasped, and stepped forward, peering into the face so long familiar to him. Silently he drew the blankets over the skipper's face.

'We never knowed what was wrong with him before, Mister Edwards, but we do now,' he said solemnly.

Dick stood for a moment bewildered. The stateroom was so quiet; the uproar of the crashing seas outside appeared to be shut out by some mysterious agency. Soon he was to realize that death gave that impression; at least, death in a bed. He took June's hand, comforting her. She was so utterly alone now. She cried softly against his wet oilskins and he patted her head.

'Don't cry, June. I'll look after you. We'll soon have you home. Just leave the steward to take charge here. I have to go up now, but I'll come down again soon. Steward, shall I send Chips down to help you?'

'Ef you please, Mister Dick. You give your orders. I heard Captain Turk tell you he depended on you to git th' ship home, sir. I allus hev respected his wishes for nigh thirty year.'

Dick ran up the stairs. He was full of a queer sense of dual being. He felt sorry about Turk's death. That was natural, for Turk had been decent to him. But it went no farther than the grief of youth for somebody less than near relative. It would have been unnatural in youth at full tide to feel deeper grief than that. The paramount feeling that animated Dick as he bounded out on deck, almost falling to a heavy lurch of the ship, was that the captain was dead, and the command devolved automatically upon the next ranking officer. That

was Ben Barrett. But Turk had said, almost with his dying breath, that he depended on Dick to get the ship home. If Ben chose to work hand-in-hand with him, there need be no fuss. If not — that was not the proper spirit to approach Ben in. Of course, Ben would swing in and make the passage as comfortable as possible. Dick would carry on as he had been going, unless Ben took it on himself to start trouble. Meanwhile, the ship needed full attention.

A squall whistled in the rigging. Snow flew blindingly. There was a different heave to the sea, as if a sudden change had taken place in the nature or the soundings of the ocean bottom under keel. Vaguely through the driving snow could be seen the stout, squat figure of Hogg, sitting on the foreroyal yard like a lump of frozen snow. Jed had gone as far as the mizzen yard, and was listening and smelling out to the northward.

'Thar's breakers or bid ice t' looard!' he yelled, as Dick got upright.

'Berg an' growlers abeam to windward!' thundered Hogg.

'It's land! High land! 'Most on th' lee quarter!' shrieked Jed.

Ben Barrett shoved aside the lee helmsman, seized the spokes, and bellowed: 'Ready about! For'ard thar! Roach, you come down like smoke. Rouse out all hands! Ease your hellum, you! What th' hell 're you keepin' her off for?'

'Hold on all!' yelled Dick, suddenly furious. He snatched the mate's hand from the wheel, savagely

bade the helmsman hold his course, and shouted to Jed, now on the skids: 'Jed, brace her up sharp's you can. Quick! She's got to weather that land!'

Men stood undecided in the conflict of orders. Only the helmsman knew what to do. He held his course. And while Dick was still shouting, Ben Barrett turned upon him in a cold rage.

'Consarn you! You've had your last say, my buck!' and reached for Dick.

'Stop it! This is no time! Cap'n Turk's dead ——' Dick began to say.

Ben heard that much, and that was enough. 'Then you're finished aft! You git for'ard, whar you belong.'

'I'm taking this ship home!' Dick stated crisply, and in that instant of emergency flung all uncertainties overboard and took the plunge. He would see once for all what Ben Barrett had. Ben meant to show him, without delay. He rushed Dick, and they grappled in a screaming blast of snow-laden wind that hove the ship down to her channels and drove her like a frightened creature of life through the leaping seas.

'Ice on weather bow!' yelled Hogg.

CHAPTER XXXI

RECKONINGS

Ben struck Dick solidly on the forehead, and the blow, with the motion of the ship, almost upset both. Dick felt for a foothold, dodging the mate's fist flurries. It was no time for fighting, he knew; but the ship could only win clear of that menace of Old Stiff and the ice by weathering all she was able to. Turk had died in the hope that his ship would reach home safely; Dick knew that hope was doomed to die right there if the ship tacked into that southward ice. And, perhaps above all, there was the unsettled question between him and the mate.

'Come and watch the steering, Jed!' he yelled, then Ben's swinging left caught him on the cheekbone and turned everything to fire. Blindly fighting off the charging mate, trying to see him, Dick punched straight out, and a lurch sent Ben hard against the punch. It dropped him in a rolling heap beside the potato locker.

'Consarn you! You've busted my nose again!' snuffled Ben, shaking his head like a bear as he knelt, peering up at Dick through shaggy brows. He watched cunningly, rising when the ship lurched to his advantage; and he was on top of Dick with a flurry of fists as the cry pealed from aloft:

'Heavy ice close to starboard!'

Ben snuffled, his nose streaming blood. And he

hit out fiercely, driving Dick across the deck, himself apparently shedding Dick's wallops like water. But Dick was punching hard and straight, and only sheer fighting frenzy carried Ben forward. Dick landed a short right to the chin that traveled six inches, and toppled Ben almost over the wheel. The helmsman shoved him off with a curse. It was stunt enough to hold the ship to her course and watch a good fight at the same time, without having to boost the fighters back into the ring.

'Breakers on lee quarter!' yelled Jed, standing at the rail abreast of the wheel. Jed was dancing with anxiety all the time his superiors were fighting. Well he might! There lay the grim outposts of the Horn; the ship was doing well, but she had yet to slide past those breakers. He knew, as all Cape-Horners knew, that to see breaking water around Old Stiff itself, anywhere to the eastward of the Ramirez, meant that the ship was too close for anybody's health.

Ben was back again, flailing desperately; Dick felt a change; the mate's punch had lost weight and sting. But a roundhouse thump split Dick's eyebrow, and another in the body made him feel as if he had swallowed a hot flatiron. Dick taunted his stomach and stepped in, trying to plant one jolt that would end it. He was scared for the ship's safety.

'Hey, you! Git away frum thet thar boat! Chips! Git for'ard and stop them fellers!' Jed Roach suddenly yelled.

Dim figures moving like shadows in the snow mobbed about the larboard bow boat. Jed bawled at Dick and Ben to know if they meant to wreck the ship and lose a boat. Jed was rattled and knew it.

'Quit, Ben!' panted Dick. 'Call it off.'

'When you hollers enough!' snuffled Ben, and struck out wildly again, cutting Dick's lips. That made Dick taste blood, and he was coldly serious. With a jarring left he popped Ben's head back; with a right hook to the chin he set Ben on his heels; and another right with his weight under it drove Ben's head against the potato locker and dropped him cold.

'All right, Jed! Get for'ard and help Chips!' Dick shouted. 'It's Yerner's lot, isn't it? Help Chips put the irons on 'em, the damned fools!' He felt victory surging up inside him until it threatened to stop his heartbeats. He snatched a glance at the land and out upon the gray sea. There was Hogg, swarming down the rigging to help master the mad mob at the boat. None but madmen would think of stealing a boat there in the welter of icy seas and with the Horn to leeward. But Yerner's gang were madmen at the moment. Then there was Ben Barrett, already stumbling to his feet, shaking his head again, like a bear. And Dick wondered just what Ben would do next. From what he had seen of the mate, a mere knockout would scarcely convince him that he was whipped. Sure enough, the mate was coming toward him, crouched. Dick had been about to take the wheel, letting the helmsman go forward

to help. Now he stopped, his hand outstretched toward the spokes.

Ben seemed to find difficulty in seeing; he weaved a bit; but he found Dick's arm, and felt along it until he got hold of Dick's fist. Dick was alert for an instant, fearing some hitherto untried trick of deep-water manhandling; but Ben only gripped his hand, gripped it hard, and looked up into Dick's face with a battered and bloody grin.

'You win, young Dick!' he snuffled. 'You're too good a man fer Ben Barrett, whether 'twuz me made you over or not. Give your orders, son. Leave th' work to me.'

'Then go and stop Yerner. He's lowering a boat!' grinned Dick, as happy as a shark full of sailors.

Ben plunged forward without a word, Hogg dropped out of the rigging on top of Stoll, and Jed was leading Chips and the cooper and the smith into the riot at the rail. Dick could watch it all now. He could feel the thrill and leap of the stressed ship under him; he could feel his own pulses leap to the grandeur of her battle, and his heart was warm to see the old ship slowly but surely thrash her windward way out past that snarling devil of Old Cape Stiff. Once let her put that frowning pinnacle of sea-fretted rock astern, and he could ease her off and run through Le Maire Straits with yard checked in.

'Them fellers must hev some good idee what's comin' to 'em at hum, to resk boat work in a place like this,' the helmsman said with a shudder.

'They're crazy!' Dick returned. 'They'll never get clear of the ship's side in this sea, if they do get the boat lowered. Watch her, there! Watch your steering! Never mind the boat!'

The ship suddenly came to a more upright angle as the helmsman, curious about the boat, let her luff. It checked her way, too; and she fell off slowly and dangerously to leeward, before she gathered full headway again. Dick leaped to the lee rail, every muscle at tension, every nerve taut, agonizingly scanning that boiling surf to leeward. If she failed now, it would be because of the helmsman's interest in that boat. The failure would be none the less fatal because of the cause. Turk, lying dead below, must know he had failed, Dick imagined. And there was nothing to be done. Nothing to be done for the ship, and those damned lunatics fighting for the privilege of committing suicide in a whaleboat.

'Here, give me the helm!' he snapped, striding over and taking the wheel. 'Go and help the mate! You're fitter for that than for steering!'

That was the first real indication of mastership in Dick Edwards. He had got his ship into a tough spot; he would get her out of it or meet disaster on his own single responsibility. He set his teeth as he gripped the wheel. Nothing but steering and bowels could answer now. As far as he was concerned, there was no boat, no Yerner — nothing at all but the battling ship, the death to leeward, and himself between. There was no ice lookout. He shut his mind to ice. It tinkled along the ship's sides, but he re-

fused to hear it. Only one thing could get the ship past Stiff, and that was cool helmsmanship.

But though he shut things out, those things still existed. Yerner and Stoll and Kopp, leaders of the disgraced gang, meant to take that boat and quit the ship. There lay land, bleak and iron-hard. Never again, until she headed in for home, would the Cuttyhunk be so near to a shore. And here were no policemen. No jails. Yerner believed that Turk meant to jail them all; and news of Turk's death had not yet gone forward. There was fighting around the boat; but that boat was surely swinging out. Desperate rascals were at the tackles. Not desperate enough to make a real attempt to take the ship, not men enough to face the penalty of their simple foolishness, they were mad enough to face a miserable end on a pitiless coast.

When Hogg dropped on top of Stoll, it was at once a case of professional pride on Hogg's part and unprofessional resentment on Stoll's. Though disrated himself, Hogg remained at heart a member of the afterguard. And Stoll was a traitor to his cloth. Instead of seeing his error and trying to redeem himself, Stoll threw in his lot with mutineers and wharf rats. Hogg once earned the name of 'Bully.' Now he acted the part on Stoll. He knocked all the wind out of Stoll when he fell on him, and while he had him down went to work on him and pounded him to helplessness. Then he left him lying in the trodden snow, to help the others.

Yerner and Kopp set their backs against the rail

and fought like badgers to hold off Jed and Chips while their pals started the boat over the side. That side of the ship was low as she leaned to the gale; that might have seemed to simplify things to the ignorant wastrels trying to lower the boat. But one glimpse at the rushing foam alongside ought to have given even idiots pause. Then Ben appeared, flicking red drops broadcast as he blew his nose with a grampus snort.

'You're a good one to start on!' he snuffled, and reached for Kopp. 'You kicked me in th' stummick once. You're one man I can lick, anyway.' Kopp fought, snarling in fear of that battered grin. Ben made no bluff at sporty fighting here. Kopp had kicked him in the stomach. He kicked Kopp in the stomach. And Kopp doubled up with a grunt of surprise. Then the ship lurched; it was the time she was almost let come upright by the careless helmsman. Some wide-awake member of Yerner's gang saw the lone chance, and yelled. The boat slipped down past the rail, and Yerner leaped into it. The rest followed, letting go the tackle falls as Kopp rolled over the bulwarks among them.

The ship had picked up her headway again. Kopp fell across the boat's gunwale, tilting her. The forward tackle unrove faster than the after one, and the bow dipped. The boat filled, Kopp fell into the sea, and then the after fall was slashed through, letting the waterlogged boat swirl fast astern of the ship with her yelping, frightened occupants. It happened swiftly. Somebody had cut that fall from

on deck. Ben saw old Jed Roach putting away his sheath-knife.

'You drownded 'em, Jed!' he said, all his anger gone in the disaster.

'I give 'em all th' chance they'll hev,' returned Jed soberly. 'If somebuddy hedn't cut thet fall, they'd ha' got towed under.'

'Might es well hev,' muttered Ben, peering into the gray mist astern. 'Secure th' boat gear that's left, anyway.'

Dick ached with tension at the wheel. He barely heard what was reported about the boat. He had not turned his head as the yelping gang sped astern into the chill unknown. He was watching the last growling breakers, and they were almost weathered. Ben said something to him, but he never heard it. He gritted out some orders about the carpenter going below to help the steward prepare the Captain for burial, then gave all his attention to his steering again. And the ship won past, fathom by fathom; hurled to leeward when a heavier sea struck her, eating her brave way up to windward at the touch of the helm as she recovered.

Then, after one breath-stopping moment of doubt, Dick's yell:

'She's made it! Check in the yards a trifle, lads! She's clear!'

CHAPTER XXXII

'RANZO IS A SAILOR!'

'Now Ranzo is a sailor,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!
He's skipper of that whaler,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!'

Dick sang that verse without thinking. It was the natural ebullition of confident youth. He had given up the helm to a seaman and paced the deck rapidly. His haste might be due to nervousness, or excitement, or sheer need of warmth — for the wind was bitter. Actually it was nothing but his old-time cockiness mellowed by hard experience into pride of achievement. He was scarcely thinking of the ship then; though he keenly kept track of the vanishing shore line and the course the ship made. That alone proved his right to the position he had taken. Ship sense was instinctive in him. He had only heard of the Straits of Le Maire, between Staten Land and Tierra del Fuego; but he was steering the ship toward the narrow strait eighty miles or so ahead with as little uncertainty as if he already saw the passage.

What he was thinking about had little to do with the ship, though she was somewhere in the train of thought. He grinned as he sang, and he sang loudly. His father used to sing that old chantey to him. At first the old man would sing it to amuse the boy.

Later, and to the end, Peter Edwards sang it to show his contempt for the first Edwards to turn up his nose at clean salt water and good healthy sperm blubber. Old Peter had said, to clinch his bitter argument, that any of those old whalemen would make fertilizer out of the lot of youthful rebels Dick ran with. Ben Barrett was about the toughest whaleman out of that port, and Ben —— Dick stopped singing to laugh. He had certainly given poor old Ben a hot handful at last. He would make it up to Ben. He owed much to Ben. That was a creditable thought for a lad like Dick Edwards. It showed that his mind was holding a true course after all. But it did not dim his triumph one scintilla.

'Hoorah! for Reuben Ranzo,
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!
Three cheers for Reuben Ranzo!
Ranzo, boys, Ranzo!'

June came out and joined him. She was wrapped up in a big coat, wore the steward's fur cap, and the smallest pair of rubber boots from the slopchest. Dick greeted her with a grin, which froze at her look.

'Dick! Have you forgotten Captain Turk is dead?' she reproved him. She had been crying.

Dick had been so full of his triumph that he really had forgotten for the moment the reason for it. And he was man enough to feel shamed before this almost fragile girl who had spent herself prodigally in tending the dead skipper.

'Gee, I'm sorry. I forgot,' he muttered, and took off his cap, for they were bringing Turk's body up for burial. That long white canvas package, sewed and roped, and ballasted with an iron sheerpole, looked shivery in the gray light. Snow settled on it as it lay beside the gangway. Dick remembered the burial of June's uncle. He looked anxiously at her, feeling that she ought to go below. But her eyes were dry now. She was going to say farewell to her friend. When that mortal bundle slipped into the chill sea, she was very much alone in the world; so far as she knew, her future went with the bundle.

'You read the service, Ben,' Dick suggested, when the grating was ready.

'Hell! I ain't fit to send nobody to heaven!' growled Ben. 'Launch him yourself, Dick. You're skipper.'

Dick was embarrassed. It was a strange feeling, but he felt inadequate in sight of that dry-eyed girl so bravely waiting. But he was taking the responsibility of the ship; he must take it all or none. He sent the steward for the Prayer-Book. And when he stood beside the grating, he tried honestly to read the service for burial at sea. He could not. He blushed, coughed, and failed. He caught the eye of Ben Barrett fixed upon him in encouragement. June was nervously waiting. Words refused to come.

'I can't say a word!' he snapped. 'How do I rate clean enough to say prayers for a man? Here, Chips, open the sewing a couple of inches!'

The canvas was opened, the Prayer-Book slipped inside, and stitched up again. Dick gave the signal silently, and the body slid down into the sea without a splash.

CHAPTER XXXIII

HOMEWARD BOUND

THERE were warm tropic days and star-dusted nights after the cruel test of Cape Horn. Days when golden weed strewed the sea, when fat sperm whales fluked and spouted about the ship in perfect security. They seemed to know how to read the signs; knew that royals set aboard a rusty, sea-bleached whaler meant a bung-full ship homeward bound.

There were windless watches when old men grumbled darkly of luck, of endless passages, of ships that had reached as far as the Line in the Atlantic and floated there unmoving until their crews fell apart and only skeletons rattled about the bone-dry decks. There were brave, blustery days when old men and young bragged like heroic liars of passages so swift that skippers had no time to keep the log written up; which was the only reason for those passages being undiscoverable in the records.

Musty old shore clothes had to come out for airing and mending. June sewed on a hundred buttons for men who believed in the adequacy of bits of rope-yarn as fasteners. The cabins had to be turned out and painted. With so rich a cargo, and in his new pride, Dick believed his ship ought to return home like a regular ship as far as paint and tar could make her. He told Ben.

'It ain't goin' to make shares any bigger,' grum-

bled Ben. 'Sometimes owners don't feel so kind to a feller for wastin' paint on a homeward-bounder. But you know best. Your father ——'

'I know!' Dick broke in with a grin. 'Dad always brags about smart ships and smart mates. Go ahead and we'll show him, Ben!'

Dick had taken pains with Ben ever since that convincing fight. As soon as he saw that the mate really wanted to work with him, and was not biding his time to wreck him, he reciprocated in a way that surprised Ben. The entire business of the mate's antagonism was a mystery; the sudden change was a deeper one; but the change was as sincere as it was apparent, and it set Dick to thinking. If Ben Barrett had been less of a whaleman and more of a self-seeker, he would have picked up enough navigation to get himself a command. At least enough so that when Turk died, he would have been in undisputed command of the Cuttyhunk for the rest of the voyage. But Ben was afraid of figures that had decimals to them. He was scared of the mere word logarithm. He could work a traverse by the book; once he had made a stab at getting a meridian altitude for latitude; but he went no farther at the time; and once he had forgotten the rule, he let it go. If he had been left to himself when the skipper passed along, Ben Barrett would have found an anchorage in the nearest port of the visible land, or at most tried for Port Stanley in the Falklands.

But under Dick's tuition Ben was seeing the light. As Dick laid them out, logarithms and decimals had

no terrors. Spherical trigonometry, as simplified by tables and explained by Dick, was amusement to a man who could cut out a topsail.

'You practice this voyage, Ben, and you'll have command the next,' Dick vowed.

Ben growled doubtfully; but he plodded on. He took sights, worked them out, and compared them with Dick's results on the day when the coast might be expected to break the horizon ahead.

'Your position agrees with mine within a mile and a half,' Dick told him. 'And you're as likely to be right as I am, Ben. The chronometer's likely to be a bit out by now, and there was a haze down at morning sight. You'd better sit for your certificate soon's we get in, old-timer.'

Ben still growled, but he felt all perked up just the same. Something might come out of this mad voyage after all. Mad voyage it had been, what with the barren months at setting out, the crazy tale of treasure that had turned the ship into a bedlam, the rich haul of whales due only to a devastating convulsion of Nature, and the death of Turk on the eve of a successful homecoming. Yes, and maddest of all, his own resignation to the usurpation of command by young Dick Edwards, a first-voyage greenhorn! But Ben always grinned at that memory. He knew his reasons. He knew what he was about, did Ben Barrett.

Then the land lay ahead. On the last of a smoky summer twilight, it was raised, and the ship changed course to run along the coast to her harbor.

'We'll be up there by morning, Ben. Do you want to get the anchors over now?' Dick remarked.

Ben did. So did the men. For once in a long time even the small-lay men were sure of taking up a bit of money. In the Cuttyhunk were plenty of old men who remembered many a voyage after sperm when they came home from a three years' voyage and not one iron dollar to come. Some of them could tell of voyages when they had to cut wood all winter for the owner to pay for money and clothes and tobacco advanced to them. Here was nothing like that. Get the anchors over? Sure, and never mind a bit of night work.

In the morning the old familiar Point lay stretched out ahead. Jed Roach pointed it out with a grin and a wink at Ben. Dick grinned, too. He knew what they were thinking about. But just at the moment, he was watching a dark blue line of cloud that overlay an otherwise faultless dawn. It looked like one of those sharp summer squalls.

'What d'you think about it?' Dick asked Jed and Ben rather anxiously. He was on his toes now. Sailing the ship up from Old Stiff had seemed easy; now he was in sight of home, and the thought of all that it meant struck him, he was almost nervous. June had been beside him for ten minutes, eager to be shown this new land that was to be home to her, too, and he had not noticed her.

'Wind, likely,' said Jed shortly. Jed was jealous for fear the lad might weaken now. Let him sail his own traverse.

'It's wind, an' plenty of it,' growled Ben. 'Maybe you kin git to anchor before it busts.'

'All right,' said Dick quickly, 'let's sock it to her!'

They sailed her. They made that old blubber-hunter hum. She foamed through the seas under powerful gusts of rising wind until the men on the lightship rubbed their eyes, and reckoned old Turk had gone crazy at last. Maybe hadn't struck one whale.

But nobody was crazy. Dick sailed the ship almost to the outer anchorage before the storm really broke; and he drove her the rest of the way on bravado. There they anchored her, for no man could have taken her up the harbor; and if there were no better tugboats now than when last she sailed home, nobody would come out for her until the storm passed.

'She ain't holdin',' Ben reported half an hour after the anchor went down.

'Give her the other one, and slack out until you have thirty fathoms on one and fifty on the other,' said Dick.

In another half-hour the ship was tugging hard at both anchors at the end of both cables. But nobody minded much. There was home, and it was only a summer storm. It would soon pass, then out would puff the tug, and home at last.

'She's dragging!' Dick said. He had watched a shore bearing. The leeward quarter was a bad nest of rocky shoals. If she dragged much nearer to that,

she was likely to put her cargo ashore on the beach and herself on the bottom.

'She's got all both cables,' said Ben. 'It's blowin' harder, ain't it, Jed?'

'Thar's more comin', too,' grunted Jed. This was where a man must show the stuff that was in him. There were people over on the shore, watching the ship every minute.

'Take Chips and stand by to slip both cables, Ben,' Dick decided at last. 'Jed, take Hogg with you. Pick the best of the men. We'll give her the three lower topsails and reefed spanker and inner jib; then slip. Reef and set the foresail, and drive her to sea again until it moderates. Better reef the foresail first. Sing out when you are all ready.'

They worked her out. Both anchors were let lie on the bottom of the sea, and folks ashore, who had watched the dragging ship, breathed easily to see her weather the shoals and square away down the leeward coast.

She ran out of sight. By evening she was working back again, with a fresh mild breeze and a sparkling sea. Outside the harbor a new tugboat steamed alongside from seaward.

'Take you up for two hundred, Cap!'

'Don't need a tow,' Dick returned.

The tug went ahead, then circled and ranged alongside again.

'Take you for a hundred, Cap. Likely to blow again.'

'I'll get in before that,' said Dick.

The new tugmaster saw the youth of the whaler's skipper and was bent on making a dollar or two. His tug had to run in for coal, anyhow. But why not make this youngster pay?

'Give us your line, Cap. Take you up for fifty dollars.'

'Put us alongside the dock for thirty, and use your own line,' Dick countered.

Jed and Ben Barrett grumbled. This was needless extravagance. The gesture of a youngster who wanted to make his home entry in style behind a fine new tug. A launch could take the lines to the wharf. Dick grinned at their mutterings.

'You're a smart one, you are!' roared the tugboatman. 'S'pose I'll hev to be charitable. Stand by to take my line, then.'

'Go on, Ben,' said Dick, and continued pacing the deck with fine nonchalance. As soon as the tug began to tow, he called the mate aft.

'Now, get sail off her, and give her a proper harbor stow. Let's show 'em something!'

Serenely they swam up the harbor. When abreast of the old wharf from which she had sailed, he could see almost everybody in the little town watching the ship, appraising her cargo by her waterline. And Dick suddenly remembered a duty he had overlooked. Sight of Mrs. Turk there on the end of the wharf gave him a sharp jolt.

'Jed,' he said soberly, all pride for the moment gone from him, 'haul the flag to half-mast. I've been so stuck up, I forgot.'

When the ship's lines were ashore, and the tugboatman had taken his thirty dollars with a sly comment on the young skipper's hard bargaining powers, Dick answered shortly. The man sheered off, muttering something about young buckos who put on dog when they got command. The man's eyes roved all over the old ship; and in a minute he yelled:

'Hey, Cap, where's your anchors?'

'Lost 'em!' Dick yelled back, and managed a grin again.

What the tugmaster said to that brought all hands on ship and shore running to hear gems of language hitherto unguessed. He had been wangled into docking that ancient ship, loaded with rich cargo, for thirty dollars, when if he had known she had no anchors and must have a tug anyhow, he could have held her owners up for a fat slice of her value.

'If there wuz any doubt about you bein' an Edwards, that's settled it!' announced Ben Barrett, regarding Dick with a new and sincere admiration.

'Hurry the gangway down, Ben,' Dick told him. 'Help Mrs. Turk aboard gently.'

Behind Mrs. Turk stalked old Peter Edwards, his eyes roving all over the ship to discover for whom that flag flew at half-mast. His deep-lined face brightened at sight of Dick; then he helped Turk's widow aboard with rough sympathy.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN CONCLUSION

SPERM oil was at top price. The Cuttyhunk paid the biggest lays in the history of the port, and young Dick Edwards had outsmarted the new tugboat skipper who had made few friends.

Old Peter Edwards took care of his old friend's widow, and June was already helping to ease the bereavement. The wife of a whaleman had need of courage. Mrs. Turk was no exception. She met life with a quiet smile, and found a great deal of comfort in the sunny girl whose own homeless state made her akin.

Ben Barrett went away to Boston to sit for his master's license, and Jed Roach surprised himself and everybody else by going with him to try for a second mate's ticket. Peter Edwards was bragging all around the little port about his boy, shanghaied off to sea on his first voyage and coming home skipper of a bung-full spouter.

'Didn't I always say th' boy was a proper Edwards?' he bragged, over and over again.

But Ben had gone away too soon to satisfy Peter. There was a juicy yarn to spin about that voyage when he came back. Dick had surprisingly little to say about it. He grinned mostly when his father tried to jump him.

'But you're goin' whalin' again, ain't you, Dick?'

the old gentleman asked anxiously. 'You done right smart your first trip.'

'I'm not sure,' replied Dick, with a mischievous grin. 'I had thought of buying Sims Revel's store and getting married.'

'Wall, ef you ain't th' beat of anythin' I ever knowed!' old Peter exploded. 'When I wanted you to go to work in th' store, you ——'

'You wanted me to swing a broom,' grinned Dick. 'Wait till Barrett comes back. Perhaps I'll go up for a license myself. But what's all the bunk I hear about that shanghai job Ben put up on me? What do you know about it?'

'Me?' Peter Edwards could look cherubic on occasion.

'Oh, well, never mind. I'll ask Ben. I'm going to see June now.'

'I'll go with you,' announced Peter. 'I hev to see Martha about some business.'

'Martha?' queried Dick.

'Missus Turk!' snapped Peter. 'Hev to make some arrangement about th' gal. Can't expect the widder to take her in jest for sentiment, can I?'

'I didn't know you were expected to bother about it at all.'

'Oh, shet up!' said Peter.

When Ben and Jed returned, there was a cozy gathering in the old whaler's cuddy. The last cedar logs from the treasure island blazed in the fireplace; there was a rich aroma of old Jamaica; the age-blackened beams were hazy with cigar smoke.

'I didn't git my license,' growled Ben Barrett. 'Them young steamboat navigators scared me out of it.' He looked fairly happy about it.

'I got my second mate's license,' said Jed. 'I guess they wuz sorry fer me. Never could hev got it ef 'twasn't for young Dick, though.'

'Seems es if you'd hev to go up an' try, Dick,' remarked Peter. 'Got to hev a skipper for th' old hooker, hevn't we?'

'I'm not sure I want to go whaling again,' said Dick.

The cuddy was warm and redolent of cigars and cedar logs and rum. In the swirling smoke it was easy for youth to see pictures. Dick went on speaking in a detached sort of voice, and somehow it lulled the older men into lazy acquiescence with his views while he was talking.

'Whaling's dying out,' Dick went on. 'It's a mighty fine school for a wild youngster, but no sort of business for a young man to enter upon. It's an old-time business; let the old-timers see it out.'

'I don't want to sail 'long o' no new skipper,' grumbled Jed.

'Me neither,' growled Ben. 'I'd ruther go fust mate wi' you, young Dick, than master wi' a new fust mate.'

Dick laughed. He got up and stretched. It was old company for young blood, and he was taking no rum.

'I've got a date,' he told them. 'Don't worry about your old blubber-hunter. She shan't lack a

skipper. Shall I give June your love, Ben? How about you, Jed? I won't take yours, Dad. You're too darned fond of hugging her now.'

Dick left a silence behind him. It lasted for many minutes. Then out of the corners, like dream voices from a mist of memories, came short, broken scraps of talk, all mellow and fragrant with Manila and Jamaica.

'Dick's stuck on thet gal ——'

'Wants to buy Revel's store an' fix it up modern, an' marry her ——'

'She ain't but a kid herself ——'

'She's es old es my missus was, Jed. But she ain't hed no home trainin'.'

'He better make another full v'yage, wi' me fust mate 'long o' him, an' Jed secont ——'

'Thet's what I been tryin' to tell him. Thet gal needs a year o' home life 'fore she's ready to be a wife. I figger Martha kin give it to her. She's in love wi' th' little gal. Who ain't? And then, when Dick comes home, he'll be older an' she'll be old enough, an' mebbe Martha an' me might ——'

'What? You old quahog!' grunted Ben, leaning forward.

'Ef you ain't ——' gasped Jed.

'Oh, shet up!' growled Peter Edwards, hauling sharp on a wind, having been surprised into words he had no intention of uttering for a long time yet. There was another near silence out of which came rumblings. When the rumblings died, old Peter's voice spoke again:

'What about young Yerner? Ben never told ——'

'Turk sent for him to tell him to be a good lad an' he'd cry quits,' Ben began; and Jed carried on:

'An' th' dumblasted rascal hed to go an' git gay wi' June. Dick turned to an' hammered seven hells out o' his mug an' hove him out on deck ——'

'So when Turk sent for him ag'in, th' whelp wuz scared to go!' finished Ben.

'I reckon they got to shore,' Jed mused. 'Thet kind would. Ef you're born to be hung, you kin never drownd.'

Another silence. The smoke and spiritual reek grew thicker. Voices lazier and drowsier.

'How about thet reward you got comin', Ben?' Peter murmured. 'Seems es if th' boy was too much for you, don't it? Or do you figger you deserve your pay?'

'I ain't sure, Peter,' said Ben gloomily.

'How about it, Jed?'

'Mebbe he don't desarve it, but he sure arned it!' chuckled Jed.

'Mebbe you're right, Jed. Mebbe you're right,' sighed Peter. 'I don't see how you missed your master's license, though. 'Twould ha' bin fitter for a master to own shares in his ship than a fust mate.'

Ben chuckled. He reached out that long, broken-fisted right arm that had played so strong a part in making a shipmaster out of a wild lad, and took a fresh cheroot. He lighted it and sank back in his chair, still chuckling.

And just at the moment when Dick Edwards and

June came out of a hug and into an agreement that he had better take the ship out for one complete voyage, and leave her in Martha's capable hands for a year's course in friendly domestic economy before turning Revel's grimy old store into a modern outfitting establishment, and making June a bride, Ben Barrett murmured through the blue and blessed haze at his somnolent and blissful old cronies:

'I hope es young Dick 'grees to take your ship out ag'in, Peter. But if he don't, I reckon mebbe I told you a lie about that license o' mine. I jest wanted to surprise him arter we got to sea, thet's all. You don't 'magine a feller es young Dick teached 'd fail, do you?'

'Seein' es you teached *him*,' came just before a snore from Jed Roach's corner.

'Ben allus hed a tall opinion of hisself,' breathed Peter Edwards.

THE END

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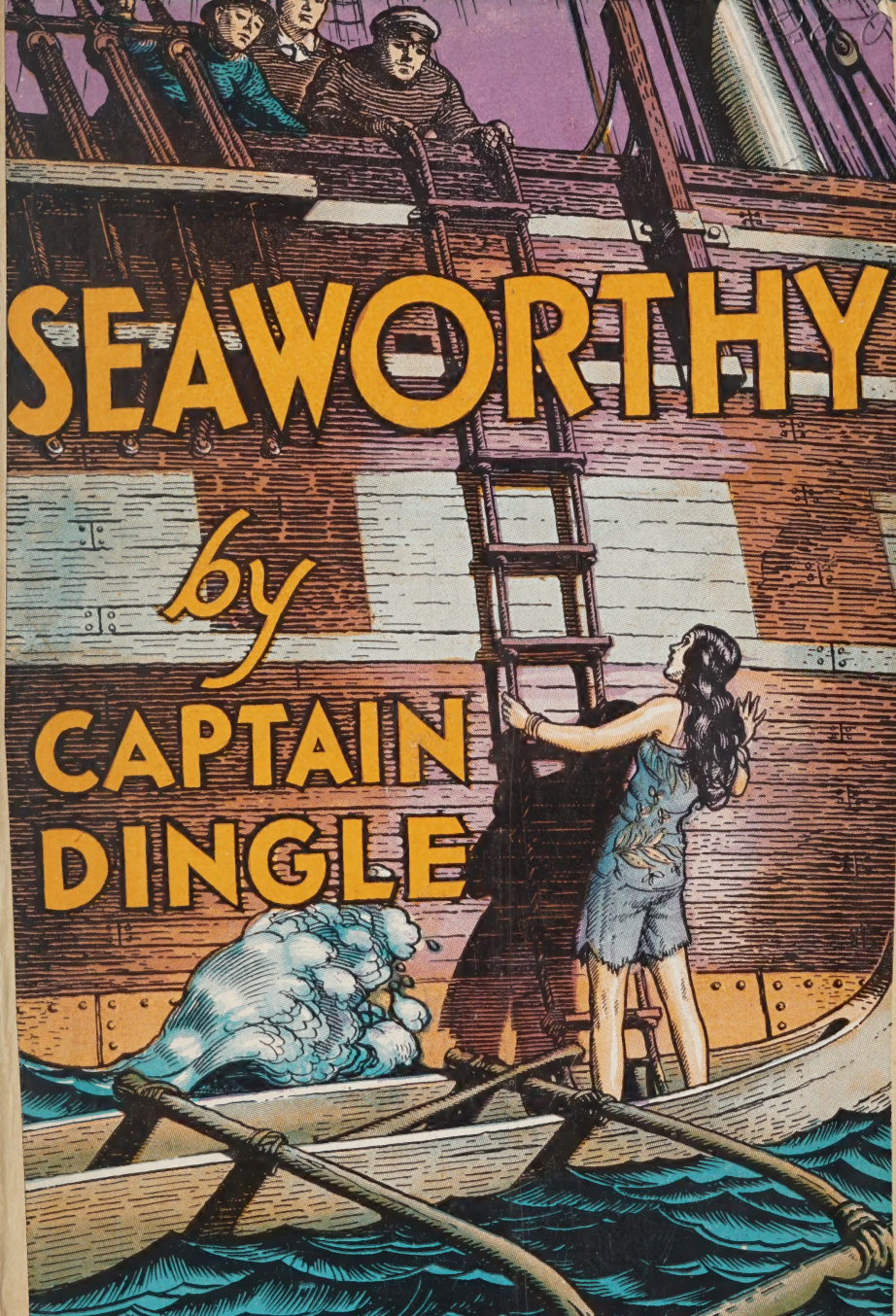
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